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Alec Templeton's music boxes

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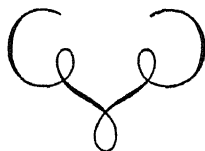
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ALEC TEMPLETON'S
MUSIC BOXES

Alec Templeton's Music Boxes

AS TOLD TO

Rachael Bail Baumel



WILFRED FUNK, INC.
NEW YORK

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and Rachael Bail Baumel

ALEC TEMPLETON'S MUSIC BOXES

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To My Julie

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MUSIC BOXES

I'm an old music box from Chicago,
And I happen to play Handel's *Largo*.
But now, mercy me!
I'm atop a T.V.
So I listen each week to Wells Fargo!



Stornello

S*tornello* IS THE TITLE OF a love song, and the Italian word for starling. It is also the name that my wife Julie and I, being romanticists, have given to our home in Greenwich, Connecticut. Surrounding our Stornello are many graceful, spreading hemlocks and stately pines, which, unlike the pines of Rome, are hung with bells that once told many a shepherd where the wandering members of his flock had strayed. When the wind blows through

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our pines, the air is filled with the sounds of bells, which remind us of the far-off places in which we collected them.

Since musical sound is my hobby, Stornello is landscaped and furnished with sound. In the summertime the music of our pines is reinforced by the songs of the birds and the Japanese wind bells which hang on our open porch. The melodic motif is also carried out in the license plate of our car. Since we live in Connecticut and can choose its letters, it spells out "SONG."

Inside Stornello the decor is also musical, except for the comfortable deep chairs and sofas, the soft rugs, and the ordinary accessories of daily life which have not yet been developed in sonic form. But there are all types of playing, caroling, ringing furnishings, from the bells and chimes to my 2 pianos, some 17 chiming clocks, an ancient Irish door harp, a zither, bagpipes, a virtuoso canary, and our collection of about 125 music boxes (or musical boxes as they were called here and still are in England).

The music boxes overflow from living-room to pantry, to second story, third story, and attic. We even have music boxes in the basement, but it is a sort of Reading Gaol for the ones that don't pay their way by producing music. As long as the melody is imprisoned, so are they.

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As a boy I loved music boxes for their unique sound, which can not be duplicated by any other instrument, and I love them even more today, in the hurried rush of modern life, for their relaxing, old-fashioned quality. There is hardly a music box in the world that can sound too loud, and in these days of screaming jets, roaring subways, and clamorous traffic, that is a most refreshing characteristic.

To me music boxes are like people. Although they may seem superficially alike, they are actually very different. For instance, we have many boxes that play *The Blue Danube*. One does it "straight," in the "classical" *Blue Danube* tradition. But our musical teapot performs it at such an accelerated tempo that the granddaddy of waltzes loses its flavor entirely and becomes a quasi-jig. Our cigarette box presents a third variation, but by this time the river has changed its tune. This is *The Blue Danube*, yet I dare you to recognize it.

Then there is the Christmas music box—a tiny manger that plays "Silent Night" like a gay waltz. If Strauss had written "Silent Night," that is the way he might have done it. Not very originally, most of our Christmas boxes play "Silent Night." I have often wondered why music box makers neglected other carols, such as "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" or "O, Little Town of Bethlehem."

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Otherwise, our boxes play an amazing variety of pieces—from familiar songs to once popular but now long forgotten tunes that undoubtedly would have led the Hit Parade many times in the nineteenth century, if there had been such a well-organized poll of musical precedence in those days. In classical music this is frequently true, too. While many of them do perform selections from well-known operas, they also dig down into now-obscure works by such famous composers as Verdi, Offenbach, and Rossini for selections from operas which were among their foremost works at the time, but are almost never heard today.

On the mantelpiece in our living-room stands Robert, a music box clock, who isn't the figure of a man at all, but a French Empire reproduction of a classical temple surmounted by an Imperial Eagle. He's called Robert because he plays an aria from Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* which, a few years after its first performance in 1831, was known throughout the civilized world. It made the fortune of the Paris Opera, and a piano transcription of its melodies by Liszt was his most commercially successful composition after the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. It was so popular with concert audiences of Liszt's day that they refused to let him leave the stage until he had performed it. Degas painted two pictures of

the ballet of *Robert le Diable*, one of which is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. It's fortunate that Degas did this, because it's pretty hard to find a performance of *Robert* today.

Robert's aria may not be very familiar nowadays, but the tune played by our little musical Japanese house complete with movable shoji was, until a few years ago, completely unknown. I thought it was a Swiss version of a Japanese tune, and said as much during Jim Fassett's Easter Sunday intermission feature on the New York Philharmonic broadcast. A few days later I received a very charming letter from a professor of Romance languages at a Midwestern university. The baffling tune, with which he was very familiar, turned out to be a Greek college song, and he sent me not only the Greek lyrics but also the English translation.

Since the sound of a music box is its most important characteristic as far as I'm concerned, I break down my collection by keys, and am particularly proud of the fact that I have boxes in every major key. In Canada I acquired a Royal Doulton toby jug, Old King Cole, that plays his merry old song in a minor key—apparently quite an accomplishment for a small music box, for I have never heard another like it; minor music boxes are almost as rare as braised lark wings. (Julie knows that whenever I

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call for braised lark wings I'm about to make some impossible request.)

Julie, too, shops for music boxes by key, but sometimes others aren't aware of this particular fact. One of our friends has a musical Christmas tree base of which I have always been very fond because it is in E major. Wanting to surprise me with a similar box one holiday season, she planned to give me a miniature tree set on a musical base. Julie, however, tried to dissuade her, and told her that if it was not in the same key I wouldn't like it at all. But the friend persisted. It *was* in E major. And it's been among my favorite Christmas boxes ever since.

As a concert artist I am in a fortunate position for music box collecting. In my travels I have been able to find music boxes in all parts of the United States, as well as in Europe and in Australia. Whenever we get into a town, we hope we will find some spare time for music box tracking. And some of my favorite boxes have been discovered in just this way. But it was a friend who brought me a miniature reproduction of Mozart's piano from the composer's native city, Salzburg. Mozart, for all his greatness, was a musical prankster, but even so he might not have liked this little piano, because it plays the "Minuet" from his *Serenade in E flat*—in A major!

Many people speak of "tinkling" music boxes.

To me the only ones that tinkle are some of the novelty modern boxes. The big antique ones are sonorous, strong and powerful, but whether large or small the old ones have a genuinely antique musical sound and many have a slightly off-key charm that defies imitation.

Our collection ranges from a tiny mid-Victorian child's toy whose handle must be turned to produce "Auld Lang Syne" with a very classical Mozart ending, through musical decanters, beer steins, jewel or dressing cases, a sewing box, and a charming little straight-backed musical chair which plays when sat upon, to two models built on their own tables and an enormous gay nineties "juke box" almost 8 feet tall. It could have been housed originally only in a saloon—or some less respectable place of entertainment. This box plays 21-inch metal discs but they have no relation to phonograph records except for the shape and the fact that both produce music artificially.

But whatever the type or form of the box—tiny theater or Victorian photograph album, hand-carved angel or jolly Friar Tuck, large or small, plain or fancy—I am never satisfied until I know everything about it. I like to listen carefully in order to be completely aware of what goes on with it musically. My extremely inquiring ear must hear every sound in-

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side each music box: the treble, the bass, the actual harmonization.

Bells and clocks intrigue me in the same way. I listen to them just as thoroughly and am not satisfied until I hear every note. When a bell strikes, I hear a chord made of the note that is the tone of the bell plus its overtones—and it is the overtones that make bells so fascinating to me.

I am very fortunate to have an extremely sensitive pair of ears, and so I actually hear more sounds or overtones than most people do. Just as the famed mountain climber Tenzing was undoubtedly helped in his successful scaling of Mount Everest by what doctors say is a slower-than-average heart beat, so I am helped in an appreciation and understanding of music by ears that are better adapted than most to hearing musical sounds.

When I was about eleven, my piano teacher, the late Margaret Humphrey, took me one day to have tea with the late Sir Walford Davies, Master of the King's Musick during the reign of George V. Sir Walford tapped a glass, turned to me and asked, "Alec, how many overtones do you hear?"

I named and sang them for him, and Sir Walford, turning to Margaret, said, "You see, he hears four more than I do."

I have always been interested in exploring uncon-

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ventional sounds. I even tap plates to find out what key they're in (the center of the plate "plays" the note, the rim gives the chord), and the moment I've drunk the contents of a glass, I tap it to check its key. I wait until it's empty so that I will get the natural note of the glass. Even pots can have a musical sound. We have an old witch's cauldron which produces a sound like an old-fashioned dinner gong.

My appetite for gongs and bells is insatiable. I would love to add to our collection some of the instruments that make up a Balinese gamelan or native orchestra. Getting hold of them would be quite a problem, though, since these orchestras are considered to be one instrument and are never separated. Playing them would be an even bigger problem, because in order to get an integrated sound, most of these instruments must be played by several musicians simultaneously, and I would need to keep a few assistants on hand for each performance.

Although I'll probably have to do without my Balinese gamelan, we do have a set of very old deep-toned Chinese gongs that hang on the porch in the summer and add their bit to the sounds of Stornello. I might add that it's quite a continuing bit, because they reverberate for several minutes when struck. They don't have a definite scale; they just produce a kind of sonic *mêlée*.

Some of the bells in the pines came from England and some from Normandy. It was in Fécamps, in Normandy, that Julie found what must be one of the world's richest bell treasure troves. Walking along a street in the little town, she spotted some sheep bells in the window of a place that seemed to be the village fix-it shop. She went in and pointed to the bells in the window. Since Julie speaks no French, and the shopkeeper spoke no English, he motioned to her, and she followed him. She was led through a long, dark, passageway out into a farmyard overrun with pigs, chickens, and sheep.

Finally he opened a barn door and, to her delight, Julie discovered that the ceiling was completely covered with bells. Hundreds of bells, of all sizes and descriptions, were suspended from every beam, every rafter, every inch of available space. At this point Stornello's bell population began growing wildly as she went into a fine bell-buying frenzy, choosing them as fast as she could point them out.

Fond as I am of the Norman bells, I have other favorites hidden away inside our clocks. A friend of mine, the Australian impresario Harold Bowden, always addresses his letters to "The House of Chiming Clocks." Since it would be a terrible waste of beautiful sound to have all these clocks set at the same hour, I have carefully scheduled them so that

each one is just slightly faster than the other. Two of them, a small one named Marion, and a huge German-made grandfather clock in E major, rate the honor of telling the correct time.

Grandpa, one of only three clocks that I have ever heard in the key of E major, was given to me by Julie as a Christmas gift after an intensive search. I am so fond of E major because this was the key of the first bells I ever knew—the chimes of Llandaff Cathedral just outside Cardiff, my native city. E major sounds very outdoors to me, maybe as the result of my boyhood insistence on going outside to listen to those chimes.

Whatever the key, the chiming is undoubtedly somewhat confusing to anyone who doesn't know the timetable. It was pretty disconcerting to some friends from San Francisco who visited at Stornello once, stayed up until 4 A.M., and rode into town with us the next morning at an extremely early hour. We noticed that they seemed pretty subdued but put it down to the time of day. Some months later, though, we saw them in San Francisco, and they inquired solicitously, "Alec, how are you? And, how are the God damned bells?" I now warn guests that the chimes continue through the night.

The clock situation was downright infuriating to one expert who came in last summer to regulate our

timepieces while we were away. When I got home I was completely discombobulated because he had them all chiming simultaneously. The sound produced could easily have called forth the Last Judgment. When I reproached him he was horrified. "Mr. Templeton," he replied, "I just can't work on clocks unless they tell the right time." Ever since then I've done my own setting and winding.

Each of the clocks has a name (as do most of the music boxes), for I have such a penchant for giving my own titles to objects and actions that I have been making up words since I was a little boy. I can't explain why, but I started at the age of five when my teacher, Margaret, found me perched on the stairs one day. "Why on earth are you sitting at the top of the stairs?" she asked.

And I replied calmly, "I'm sitting on the *cofits*." This made perfect sense to me; I *was* sitting on the *cofits* (the name I'd given to the fifth step from the top). But I'm afraid Margaret was a bit mystified. I'm sure others are equally surprised to hear Julie and me chatting away in a language that's completely unrecognizable because by this time there's practically a private Templeton dictionary. If printed it would be a pretty slim volume compared to the lexicons of other foreign languages, but it would cover quite lengthy conversations. One of the words

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that would certainly go into it is *zack*, which means "go" or "work." Like our music boxes, all of our clocks must *zack*. Otherwise they, too, move to the cellar.

One of our clocks is called the *Ugvie*, Templetonian for wife or husband, since Julie gave it to me. The *Ugvie* is unusual because it indicates the hour each time it chimes one of the quarters. And it is the *Ugvie* which serves as one of the melodic inspirations for our canary who is named Geraldine Farrar because she is such a beautiful singer.

If Gerry hasn't been warbling for fifteen minutes, the *Ugvie* triggers an aria. But Gerry, who is an extremely selective singer, is a longhair bird, not a jazz bird. She frequently bursts into song in obbligato to Jascha Heifetz, especially when he plays the Glazunov Violin Concerto, and she is partial to Bach, Debussy, and Beethoven. Her taste is so classical that she doesn't even like Gershwin. But she is very fond of one of our cuckoo clocks, which plays Schubert's "The Trout," and whenever I wind up the Swiss music box, complete with its own matching table, that sits just outside our bedroom door, she bursts into full-throated melody.

Although they haven't been christened with such famous ones as Gerry's, I have also given names to the outdoor birds. Unfortunately there aren't as

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many outdoor birds around Stornello as I would like because of the activities of Louis Armstrong, our Persian cat, and Tigheen, our outdoor cat, who had a Persian mother and a wandering father. I'm afraid that our Louis' main interest in music is confined to chasing the feathered musicians, but every once in a while he does live up to his name in some small way. Like Scarlatti's cat, who inspired "The Cat's Fugue," Louis has a habit of walking over the piano keys. I've never put these feline melodies on paper, but time and again I've improvised on Louis' themes. Although Tigheen follows the same hunting pattern as Louis, his musical talents have not yet manifested themselves, since the living-room, and therefore the piano, is off-limits to him.

Among the flying singers present in spite of Louis' and Tigheen's combined efforts are the *vixels*. Because in Templetonian a *vixel* is a quarrel, I've given this name to the blue jays. Another bird is called the "oily swing," since he almost exactly reproduces the squeaking sound made by an old fashioned schoolyard swing that has recently been lubricated. A third type is the "perfect fifth," for he sings that exact interval, and a fourth is the "jazz bird," who sounds off with "dah-dee-ah dah-dee-ah." It's easy to tell by their songs that these

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birds are American. But once in Paris I heard a very Gallic bird that sang "*mais oui*."

I know of only one truly international animal—a French poodle who understands French, Italian, and English. While our own dogs, Rembrandt and Gretel and their three offspring, have an international background, they understand only English. Rembrandt and Gretel are keeshonds, Dutch dogs of the Pomerian-Husky-spitz family, which look rather like gray Huskies. These dogs, despite the fact that they are used to guard barges in Holland, have sweet, gentle dispositions. Keeshonds are actually fur-bearing animals and don't need to be bathed or clipped any more often than a mink coat. When we got Rembrandt in 1951 there were only ninety-four of them in the country. By this time the population has grown, but it's still fairly small. Gretel arrived at Stornello two Christmases ago—a gift from J. Whitney Peterson and his wife Clementine. Gretel is the daughter of their champion dogs, What-a-Girl and Banner.

Aside from the fact that Gretel produced her puppies on Grieg's birthday (June 15), she has no apparent affinity for music. I think that Rembrandt is slightly more interested than Gretel, but his main preoccupation with sound seems to be in the direc-

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tion of producing as many decibels as possible whenever anyone who isn't a member of the family appears on the premises. This even includes people he knows.

Once one of the churches here in Greenwich needed to borrow a piano, and having heard that we had a spare in the basement, asked if we'd loan it to them. I told them that of course we would and they promptly sent four men over to get it. One of them was a big strapping fellow who had been around Stornello many times before, delivering and moving things.

But when the quartet arrived, Rembrandt had a fit. He barked and jumped and carried on and although he didn't actually touch any of them, three of the men cowered. Then our friend, the fourth, stepped out and called encouragingly, "Don't worry, fellows. I know him. He won't hurt you. That's Gainsborough. Hello, Gainsborough, hello fellow. Here, Gainsborough." Anyway, he had the right profession.

While Stornello, having been built about fifty years ago, is hardly ancient enough to have collected any ghosts of its own, the gently twanging off-key notes of our antique Irish door harp have led some visitors to suspect that a specter or two may have

followed it here. This lyre-shaped instrument is equipped with metal balls hanging on wires and when the door moves, the balls hit the strings. I have deliberately tuned it so that it will be off-key, and its ethereally discordant notes sound as though at least one heartbroken wraith should be wringing her hands nearby. If possible I give the door a hearty push as it is closed so that entering guests will get the full effect. We've collected some startled reactions from the uninitiated.

My zither doesn't create such a "music of the spheres" effect as does the door harp, but I do have it tuned to one big chord so that I can take full advantage of the overtones and harmonics. The result is what I would call a very old muffled Debussy effect.

The zither was a birthday present from Julie who, to add to the suspense, put it in a shirt box. (Like all men, I don't exactly adore getting shirts, ties, socks, and handkerchiefs as gifts.) We were celebrating with friends when she gave it to me and since she said it contained a shirt, I put it aside, deciding there was no rush to open that kind of remembrance. But Julie insisted on my unwrapping it, and to my delight the gift was musical instead of utilitarian.

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The moment I opened the package, I knew that I would use it for an unusual effect. It has a wonderful soothing sound, very veiled and distant. When I play it, the music is quiet, impressionistic, the kind of sound I love. To me it is Debussy. When I hear his music, I never think of a keyboard or of anybody playing; it seems that the wind brings the harmonies down to me, as though they were coming from way, way up in the clouds somewhere. I call it "sky music," because the sky to me is like a great big chord which has no beginning and no end. When I sit on the porch on a gorgeous summer afternoon and touch the strings of the zither lightly, it gives me the same feeling, of sound going on and on, never quite seeming to stop.

That's my theory of music—it has no ending. I don't like to finish things on a definite chord, for I've always had the feeling that if I end my day on a resolved chord I have put a stop to everything. When I go to a concert where the music winds up in a grand finale, I like to come home and play the zither. Then I can go to bed happy.

I'm not at all like Beethoven in that respect. There's a story that once when he was asleep, someone came and played an unresolved chord on his piano. The sound upset him so much that he woke

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up and couldn't go back to sleep. He went downstairs, sat at the piano, resolved the chord, and went back upstairs to bed. This could never happen to me; I'd rather have the unresolved chord.

From Salzburg comes a replica
Of Mozart's harpsichord—
We're glad he didn't hear it;
He would surely not applaud.

He would say: "This is my Serenade;
I'm quite aware of that—
But it's playing in A major
When I wrote it in E flat!"



Why I Like Music Boxes

WHAT DO MUSIC BOXES mean to me? People have asked me why I am so fascinated by them, and the reason is a combination of many things. I love music boxes for their very special tone, of course, but chiefly because they draw me gently and inescapably into the past. I find these

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sound reproductions from the past comforting and reassuring in a world that contains almost too much of everything except calmness and beauty.

Music boxes have a special quality which takes you back to the old world, or to the earlier days of the new. Listen to one and you may suddenly feel yourself floating down the Grand Canal or boating on the Seine, walking through the coolly refreshing gardens of the Villa d'Este on a hot summer day or strolling along a flower-scented lane in the Cotswold hills in the spring twilight. They may capture an enchanting illusion of a Neapolitan street scene, return you to the romantic measures of an *ante-bellum* ball, or call forth the rousing tunes of an old-time minstrel show.

To me they are like friends. Hearing my first music box as a little boy in Cardiff gave me the feeling of meeting someone whom I knew would be congenial. Hearing a music box again as a man—many years and many concerts later—in the late 1930's in Galveston, Texas, was like greeting an old and beloved companion. Music boxes had been the first important musical sounds I knew after the piano. And when I heard that box in Galveston, I felt a tremendous thrill at recapturing a wonderful old sound.

I have been told that once when I was only two, I

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began to fuss and fret as the melody of a barrel organ came floating in through the window. A neighbor who was holding me on her lap took me over to the piano in the hope of distracting me. According to this story, my attention was not diverted. Instead I began playing the barrel organ's tune—and in the same key.

Somewhere in my subconscious, I carry around that fleeting barrel organ melody. But, after the piano, the sounds I remember best from childhood are music boxes and bells. I used to stop anything I was doing to listen to whatever bell I heard. As I walked along the street, I'd halt the bicyclists and ask them to ring their bells so I could hear what keys they were in. I especially loved to go visiting, since a trip to a different house not only frequently offered me the opportunity to hear a new music box, but it invariably gave me the chance to hear a new doorbell. I was careful to take full advantage of this by ringing the bell as loudly and as long as I could to fill my ears with the sound. I imagine that some people were less than delighted by my desire to hear every bell in their house, including the telephone bells.

Playing with my small contemporaries, I heard many tiny music box toys, the kind that play as they wind, like our little "Auld Lang Syne" box

which I acquired recently. But even though I loved music boxes greatly, I didn't own one until about 1939. For in the early days, I didn't have time for a hobby. I started to play the piano at the age of two, and began my formal musical training when I was four. A year later I made my first public appearance at a children's concert. The first great piece of music I heard, and one of the first I learned, was Mozart's Piano Sonata in A Minor.

In the years that followed, I became increasingly absorbed in my studies and in my career and had little time to think about music boxes. In fact, my early attraction to them was gradually dulled. Although my time was completely occupied at first by Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms, I later became interested in the works of the more modern composers. I admired Stravinsky, but my favorites were Debussy and Ravel. My feeling for French impressionist music was very strong. When I first heard Debussy and Ravel in the mid-twenties, their works were called modern, and people like John Ireland and Cyril Scott were writing very Debussyish music then. It's amusing that everybody now considers Debussy so "classical." But when he entered his symphonic suite, *Printemps*, in a competition where Gounod was one of the judges, Gounod thought it was much too daring!

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The twelve-tone composers are one group by which I was not particularly intrigued. I'm simply not a twelve-toner. Oddly enough, everyone thinks of the twelve-tone group as being super avant-garde, but Schönberg formally arrived at his system more than forty years ago, in 1914, and Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* appeared in 1922, which is a long way back. But instead of hankering for atonality, I was much more interested in Gershwin with his combination of jazz and classical music.

However, I do love the atonality that a music box can produce. Some music boxes which haven't been given the kind of tender loving care they deserve and which, through various accidents, have had their combs, cylinders, or discs damaged, can manage to sound pretty twelve-tone at times.

Music boxes came back into my life in 1937 in Galveston. It was two or three years after I came to the United States and I had been playing a concert in the Texas city. After hearing a wonderful old music box there, I said, "Heavens, music boxes! I've got to start collecting them." Since I have, I haven't been able to stop, and if the music box population around Stornello increases much more, we'll have to expand the house to accommodate them.

The Galveston box, a cylinder type the size of a large jewel box, keeps popping up in my life. Shortly

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after Julie and I were married in 1940 we were in Galveston, where during a radio interview I mentioned having heard and loved that music box. Its owner got in touch with me and arranged to have me hear it again. Ever since, whenever we've been in the area, we've visited the music box, or *vice versa*. The last time we were in Texas, it was *vice versa*, for the box and its owner now live in Mexico. But knowing how fond I am of it, she brought it all the way up to Houston, where I was giving a concert. It created quite a din in the post-performance confusion of my dressing room, but I loved it.

That music box, like all music boxes, has a personality of its own. And the fact that its sounds can't be duplicated is a delightful asset in these days when the world is flooded with practically perfect reproductions of everything from diamonds to paintings.

There are two reasons why it's impossible to imitate a music box on a piano. First, many of them, especially the old ones, are slightly off-pitch. Second, the double notes, which are really the same notes repeated to produce a more sustained tone, give a *tremolo* effect. The best music box imitator is not the piano but the celeste, which is a keyboard instrument whose heavenly-sounding tone is created by the mundane method of having hammers strike steel

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plates which are suspended over wooden resonating boxes. I don't know whether or not the celeste took its tonal inspiration from the music box. I do know that it was invented much later, having been created by a Parisian, Auguste Mustel, in 1886. Tchaikovsky was one of the first composers who wrote for the new instrument, using it for the famous celeste solo in "The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" from his *Nutcracker* ballet; and Richard Strauss used it in the musical phrase that accompanies the presentation of the rose in his romantic opera, *Der Rosenkavalier*.

Since man is always attempting the impossible—and far be it from me not to follow the pattern—I often improvise a piece which I call "The Music Box." It combines two of my own little tunes, the sort of melodies you'd hear on a small musical cigarette or powder box, and I repeat them one after the other, just as this kind of box would. This composition has never been put on paper because I prefer to let the ideas come to me as I play and think of the music boxes. I'm always trying to get closer to their actual sounds.

But what very often makes imitation impossible is the way a music box has of going off in a totally unexpected direction, which may or may not have been planned for the box originally. Certainly the mechanical quirks that in many cases make antique

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music boxes such interesting listening for me were developed through the years, and had no part in the make-up of the boxes when they were new. With age, misuse, or both, the mechanism may have gotten slightly out of whack. It is this limitation that has sometimes led composers astray. This is even true of Anatol Liadov's famous *A Musical Snuff-Box*, for no music box has as much of a symphonic feeling as the nineteenth century Russian composer has put into his work. It was, incidentally, written for the piano, but has since been arranged for small orchestra and also adapted for the Russian ballet.

Although many music boxes do play quite complicated compositions, they are never as involved as *A Musical Snuff-Box*. Even the best of the music boxes that play classical compositions do, after all, have mechanical limitations. It is these limitations that are largely responsible for producing the tone that gives music boxes their relaxing charm. Winding up a music box is one of the best ways of unwinding that I know. Dining to the tune of a music box is a sure way of avoiding ulcers, and playing one first thing in the morning is certain to obliterate the mid-twentieth century jitters.

Possibly it was because I felt in danger of coming down with this ailment that I started collecting them again. Anyway, soon after my Galveston re-

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introduction, which was long before the music box renaissance had occurred, I heard one over NBC in Chicago. It was playing a part of Sir Arthur Sullivan's "The Lost Chord" as the theme for a soap opera. Immediately I became one of the show's fans—at least to the extent of tuning in at the beginning and end of it every day.

Since I was living in Chicago at the time, I decided to hie myself down to the station and find out about the box: why it had supplanted the perennial organ as theme music for this type of drama and what else besides "The Lost Chord" was in its repertoire. How it found its way to the station I'll never know, because the only information that the people there could give me was that it had been in the building for years. But I did dig out all the discs—loads and loads of them—and played every one. I suppose I'm the only person who really got to know what that box was like.

Music boxes sometimes pop up in odd places, as I discovered one day when I received a large carton postmarked "Hollywood." It contained an orphan music box that had knocked around MGM for years until a friend of ours spotted it. After discovering that no one quite knew what to do with it, she suggested, "Why don't we send it to Alec?" It was

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promptly dispatched and now has a home with its many relatives in our collection.

Its first Templeton relative was a musical beer stein which plays "Auld Lang Syne," and which was given to me in 1939 by Violet Koontz, whose husband, Ernst, was then manager of the Blackstone Hotel in Chicago.

From then on my hobby was collecting music boxes and little by little I have added to the collection as I have traveled to various spots in and out of the United States.

Music boxes have come to Stornello from almost every spot on the globe, and I've listened to them in almost as many places as we've found them. But the most unusual music box listening I have ever done was on the telephone.

This musical conversation took place in Winnipeg. I was in my hotel room resting in preparation for a concert when the telephone rang. A man's voice at the other end of the line asked, "Mr. Templeton?" I answered "Yes," and waited for the voice to continue. But instead of a vocal reply I received a melodic one, for the next thing I heard was a marvelous music box playing Sarastro's aria "Within These Sacred Halls" from *The Magic Flute*.

It was a great big production number that included everything Mozart wrote plus a lot of ca-

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denzas, trills, embellishments, and flourishes that the music box added on its own. It played the aria twice, and used different musical trimmings each time.

After I had listened for about ten minutes, the voice reappeared. "I know that you have a concert today, Mr. Templeton, and I didn't want to bother you. But I was so anxious to have you listen to this music box that I decided to play it for you over the telephone. I love it so much I wanted you to hear it."

I've never talked to a more considerate person or had a more fascinating telephone call.

Music box collectors are, as a rule, a considerate group of people. But one afternoon we were pursued via the telephone by a woman who insisted that we come out to see her collection.

"I'm sorry," Julie said, "but Mr. Templeton is playing a concert tonight and he never leaves the hotel on concert days."

"But this is outrageous!" the woman persisted. "I have a very famous collection, and the least you could do is come to see it."

After she called back several times, Julie finally gave in and agreed to go out by herself. Poor Julie! On occasions like this she's really my whipping-boy.

Three hours later, exhausted, Julie returned. "I've just seen two rooms full of the most fantastic collec-

tion of junk. The woman is a real crackpot. She has broken saucers, chipped teacups, shattered dolls' heads—and only one music box, which doesn't even work properly!"

"Shattered dolls' heads?" I asked. "I really should have gone."

One music box collector I'll never forget was a charming old gentleman we met up near Buffalo where I was playing a concert. There was an antique shop in the hotel lobby, so of course we inquired about clocks and music boxes. Although they didn't have any, we were told about a shoe repairman who did.

Since I was busy rehearsing, Julie was elected to find him. And it was some job. She drove for miles and miles to the other side of Buffalo and, after asking enough questions to fill several Gallup polls, arrived at the shoe repair shop. But she got there only to discover that the man had sold out and lived even further away.

However, she was able to get his new address, and after we left Buffalo we finally did locate him. He was a sweet-faced old man who looked just like Santa Claus—complete with a white beard and a smile on his face. When we told him that we came to look at his music boxes because we'd heard he had some for sale, he stopped dead in his tracks. Tears

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came to the poor little fellow's eyes as he said, "I've waited for you folks all my life." Then he told us that he had sold most of his collection because his wife had declared, "Either they go or I go."

In spite of the ultimatum, he had managed to hold onto some very beautiful ones—among them a Venetian glass decanter, which we bought, that plays one Italian air and one non-Latin melody, "Within a Mile of Edinburgh Toon."

Although many friends have given me music boxes as birthday or Christmas gifts, or as mementos of trips, Julie must get the credit for discovering most of the boxes that now inhabit Stornello. When it comes to finding music boxes, she has a talent for detective work that combines all the best attributes of Sherlock Holmes, Nero Wolfe, and Sergeant Friday. But sometimes they appear at our door totally uninvited.

Shortly after we were married, we spent a number of months in Hollywood. We had rented a place in Beverly Hills—our first little *vie*, which rhymes with "why" and is "house" in Templetonian. One day, to my surprise, I heard the notes of a music box floating in through the window. It turned out to be, of all things, the ice cream man announcing his wares, and, in the true Hollywood fashion, he had a loudspeaker attached to amplify the sound. This

wasn't the only one, either. All the ice cream vendors had music boxes, and all were amplified.

I prefer listening to music boxes without amplification, but whether "miked" or not, I give each one a complete tonal analysis before I am through. Even before playing a box, I check to hear what key it's in. If it's small enough, I hold it to my ear and thump it slightly; larger boxes I leave where they sit or stand, and strike them gently. When hit lightly a music box gives a medley of chords which tells its key.

Very often the key of a music box is somewhat in between keys when compared to the pitch of a tuned piano, or to concert pitch. True, an A is an A and a B flat is a B flat, but in between these can be a high A or a low B flat. Some, of course, are perfectly on key, but whether off or on, music boxes are almost always in only one key. The combs are tuned to the seven-note (diatonic) scale in whatever major key is selected. Then a few additional sharps or flats are put in to take care of any accidentals in the music. But you don't find a normal chromatic scale with all the sharps and flats that are on a piano.

In addition to being in an off key to begin with, music boxes are frequently out of tune in another way—the relationship of the notes to each other. To me this is an added attraction, because the off-key-

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ness is consistent. It's not like a singer who can't quite reach a certain tone and therefore flats it, or a violinist who doesn't always manage to hit a note on the nose. No, music boxes are out of tune in a very special organized way.

If you could play the comb of a music box with your hands, and you played the scale in octaves, you would discover that each octave is perfectly in tune with the others. Only a few notes in the scale will be off key—a C sharp and an F sharp in the key of D major, for instance, but they will always be out of tune in every octave on the comb. My beautiful big Swiss box, the one that inspires Gerry to such flights of song, is definitely off key; the octaves match, but the scale is out of tune. Robert, the music box clock, is not, though. You could play every one of his notes on the piano.

All this may give the impression that a music box is terribly out of tune. But the deviation is usually so slight that only a very careful listener or one with a trained musical ear is likely to hear it. Far from being a disadvantage, this slight off-key sound is a distinct advantage, because it gives music boxes their wonderful old-fashioned flavor.

Tonal nuances and keys have always been one of my great preoccupations. Different major and minor keys have specific associations for me, frequently

with food. Even as a child I had favorite keys—E major, B major, F sharp major and B flat major.

E major, the one that I prefer above all others, means the outdoors, but it also reminds me of fruit, mainly citrus fruit and apples. B major could be pears, apricots, peaches, grapes, or tomatoes. D major, on the other hand, has a wonderful beefsteak flavor. A thick juicy porterhouse or sirloin, medium rare, would definitely be D major. Brahms Second Symphony, Beethoven's Second Symphony, or their violin concerti, would go equally well with beef and kidney pie or roast beef and Yorkshire pudding.

C sharp minor (the relative minor key of my favorite E major) and D flat major are cold dishes to me—like a piece of cold salmon, steak, or roast beef. They're what you have left over from Brahms or Beethoven.

But a particularly gooey hot fudge sundae is very Rachmaninoffish. When it comes to candy, peppermints are perfect for Haydn or Verdi. Once at a concert I was enjoying a peppermint drop as the orchestra began playing *La Mer*. After the first bar of music I realized that this was all wrong. I should have had a tangy, juicy lemon drop to go with that composition.

I have often thought that some day I'd like to give a dinner party with a musical menu which

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would feature *hors d'oeuvres* served to Bach's *Third Brandenburg Concerto*, porterhouse steaks to be eaten to Brahms' *Second Symphony*, and an ice cream dessert to be served to the strains of Rachmaninoff's *Second Piano Concerto*. Or the menu might be varied by substituting a soup course for the *hors d'oeuvres*. Tomato soup goes very well with the first movement of *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, and the "Overture" to *The Magic Flute* is just made to order for lobster bisque. (By the way, if you prefer lamb and mint sauce to porterhouse steak, please bear in mind that the *only* musical accompaniment is the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's *Messiah*!)

One composer who can't appear on this musical menu is Wagner. Just one act of any of his operas would be a full course dinner, and in order to listen to a whole opera, we'd have to have a four-day fiesta. Selections from opera seem to bring out the best in every music box, however. They certainly make a big *thwy* ("production") over operatic arias, dressing them up with the most prima donna-ish embellishments imaginable. Instead of really holding a note, which is even more difficult for a music box than it is for a singer who's running out of breath, they go into complicated runs, trills, and cadenzas that imitate beautifully the technical feats of the coloratura.

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These cadenzas are the music box's own additions to the original melodies, but they by no means violate operatic tradition. In the old days it was standard practice for every coloratura to sing her own private cadenza for an aria, a cadenza written neither by the composer nor by the lady herself, but obviously by someone who had her best interests at heart, at least vocally. For this was the singer's opportunity to demonstrate her vocal technique, and it was also excellent applause insurance for the aria.

Although cadenzas actually originated with singers, it didn't take very long for them to catch on in instrumental music. The cadenza was bound to be popular instrumentally, since it provided increased audience appreciation for the performer, and enabled the composer to take a "breather" and change the pace. Often, the composer took a real "breather" and let the performing instrumentalist do his own composing right on stage in the inspiration of the moment. Beethoven allowed the fiddler to improvise the cadenzas for his violin concerto, but he composed them himself for all his piano concerti. And Beethoven wrote them for Mozart's D Minor Piano Concerto, too.

But Mozart improvised his own cadenzas as he played, and therefore he didn't always write them

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into his concerti. And he wrote cadenzas for concerti by several other composers, including Bach.

The last piano concerto that Mozart wrote is Number 27 in B flat major (K.595). I think it is one of his most beautiful. Oddly enough, K.595 is rarely performed and I well remember the first time that I played it with Pierre Monteux conducting the San Francisco Symphony. Altogether, Mozart wrote five piano concerti in this key, and Monteux had rehearsed the wrong B flat major concerto with the orchestra! The mix-up was quickly remedied, of course, but K.595 is so infrequently played that that was the famed conductor's first performance of it. It's certainly not unusual to hear a first performance of Stravinsky or Milhaud—but a first performance of Mozart!

Even Mozart might have been impressed by the cadenzas "composed" by music boxes for their arias. The same box that is capable of rendering a straight version of "The Old Oaken Bucket" or "In the Gloaming," trimmed with only a few trills, can give the most flowery of cadenzas to an aria. Our beautiful Swiss music box built upon its own table glorifies "The Last Rose of Summer" with a cadenza in the grand manner, complete with an impressive ritardando after what would be the words "No

flower of her kindred, no rose is nigh," if a soprano were in charge of the proceedings. That and an aria from Verdi's *Nabucco*, which is on the same box, contain the two best music box cadenzas in the whole collection. Both have running bravura passages. When my vocalist friends visit Stornello, we have great fun playing and singing along with these rolls.

But another of our boxes does pretty well by giving the "Intermezzo" from *Cavalleria Rusticana* a fancy cadenza, instead of the two chords that are played by the usual ninety-piece opera house or symphony orchestra. It's too bad that none of our boxes does the famous "Queen of the Night" aria from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. I can just imagine what a music box would do with that, one of the most complicated and difficult arias ever written for coloratura.

I think that music boxes—or their makers—were more musical than sometimes we give them credit for. One of our boxes, which I call the Uncle John because it plays a tune called "Oh, Uncle John," also has the "Grand March" from *Tannhäuser* on its program. Wagner never used and hated cadenzas. Arias are almost non-existent in his operas, too, for his theory of opera was one of continuous sound for voice and orchestra. This apparently was

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appreciated by Uncle John's maker, because the march is played in a manner that would even have pleased Wagner himself.

Although we must give some music box makers credit for being more musical than would be expected, others do deserve a few demerits on this score. On the debit side of the ledger is a musical candy dish version of the "Toreador Song" from Bizet's *Carmen*. It's done in a Scotch reel sort of way: Escamillo almost has bagpipes, and I call it the "Bonny Toreador." Just to add to the confusion, the dish itself is decorated with a picture of Orpheus leading Eurydice out of Hades.

My own first encounter with vocal music was choral rather than operatic, and occurred when Margaret took me to the Three Choirs Festival in Hereford. I was ten or eleven at the time, and it was quite an experience for me. Practically all the great modern English composers were there—Sir Edward Elgar, Gustave Holst, and Ralph Vaughan Williams all conducting their own works. The only composer on the program who didn't conduct his own work was Beethoven, whose Ninth Symphony closed the festival. I was just as excited by the presence of all these great musicians as any of today's youngsters would be by a roomful of Hollywood stars.

Among the works on the program of the festival,

which was and still is held every year in the cathedrals of either Hereford, Worcester, or Gloucester, was Elgar's Second Symphony in E Flat Major. This was my introduction to what I consider his greatest work. I'm always plugging this Second Symphony of Elgar's. I often call up the local radio station when we're on the road and ask them to play it.

Although I didn't meet Ralph Vaughan Williams at the Three Choirs Festival, I have very good reason to remember my first meeting with him. I was seventeen, was in my first term at the Royal College of Music in London, and had composed a trio for flute, oboe, and piano. I wrote it chiefly for my own amusement, because a flute student and an oboe student were neighbors of mine at the small hotel where I was living.

Having written it, I decided to enter it in the annual school competition. When I told one of the school's directors what I planned to do, he warned me not to be disappointed if I didn't win. No first term student ever had. Somewhat cockily, I decided to meet the challenge. Instead of submitting the score, I brought the flutist and the oboist along and the three of us played it. When we had finished performing, Vaughan Williams, who was the chief adjudicator, remarked, "There's one thing I like about

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it. You're not afraid to write too high for the oboe."

"Oh well," I thought, "at least there is *one* thing he likes about it." I was now fully convinced that the school director was right. But my trio took first place, and it was Vaughan Williams himself who was responsible for this award.

As time removed me from my school days, the trio was quite forgotten, until one day several years ago I met Julius Baker, whom I consider the world's greatest flutist. He introduced me to Albert Goltzer, a wonderful oboist. This association must have jolted my memory, because suddenly I recalled my trio, and knew that I'd found the perfect combination to record it.

Although my first prize for composition didn't come along until I was seventeen, I really started composing at the age of four, but I had been improvising since the first time I managed to reach the keys of a piano. When I was five and was asked to play a Mozart sonata which I hadn't yet learned, I would play those sections I remembered, and improvise the rest.

Whether or not the listeners at that time were aware of it, I'll never know. Today, of course, whenever I improvise, I make my audience completely aware of it. But once in Washington, as a result of my having told some people of my childhood per-

formance, I had an amusing experience. The eminent music critic, Glenn Dillard Gunn, came backstage after a concert to question me about Debussy's *Le petit negre* which I had performed. This was an unpublished and scarcely known work that I had learned from a friend of Debussy's. But Dr. Gunn was unaware of this.

"Now, Alec," he said, laughing, "you know that's not Debussy. That's pure Templeton."

"Thank you for the compliment," was the only reply I could think of, although I was somewhat disturbed by the implication that I had fooled my audience. I was about to explain further when other friends came backstage and interrupted us. And so he left the hall thoroughly convinced that he was right. However, the next day I phoned him and disabused him of this notion. When *Le petit negre* was published a few years later, Julie and I thought of sending Glenn a framed copy, but we decided not to rub it in.

Improvising in the style of Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, or Brahms is to me almost like talking to them. While you can chat with Milhaud or Stravinsky, it is impossible to converse with any of the great composers of the past. But one way I can get closer to them—in addition to playing their works

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—is by improvising in the style in which they wrote.

I remember once I was entering a music contest in Cheltenham and the test piece was Brahms' Rhapsody in B Minor. Having worked and worked and worked on the Rhapsody, I knew it backward and forward. Then two or three days before the festival, Margaret played practically the whole Brahms piano repertoire so that I would be thoroughly steeped in his style. Finally she said, "Listen to this," and she played a theme with one finger. Next she asked me to improvise on the theme and I did. "Now would you like to hear what Brahms did with it?" she asked, and she played his Intermezzo in E Flat Minor.

During a concert I always ask the audience to call out five notes and then name the composers in whose style they'd like to hear me improvise. Once at a Carnegie Hall concert I was asked to improvise in the style of Bach. Later, when I heard the air check which is always made at these concerts, the improvisations were just as new to me as they had been to the audience. And I liked the Bach so much—that I learned it! Thus, an improvisation became a composition.

Just as I like to improvise on themes provided by

my music boxes, so do my music boxes on occasion get very pianistic. The one that comes closest to the piano is a disc of Chopin's famous *Valse Brilliante* in A flat, which, as is so often the case with music boxes, is played in a different key. In this version, the *Valse* in A flat becomes the *Valse* in F.

The Chopin *Valse* is the only serious composition for piano that is played by any of our boxes, but several of them play piano show pieces such as "Monastery Bells" or "The Maiden's Prayer." These were compositions with which young ladies of yesteryear dazzled their parents' friends on a Sunday evening in the parlor. I can just imagine a walrus-moustached grandpa asking for a music box and refusing to buy it unless "Monastery Bells" was in its repertoire.

One day, while Julie and I were listening to the Chopin waltz on our Stella, I became nostalgic about my first experiences with Chopin. "I didn't really get any Chopin, Julie, until quite late in life," I told her.

"That's awfully strange, darling," she said. "To me Chopin has always been a measuring-stick for pianists. How did it happen?"

"When I was five or six Margaret played some Chopin for me and I was so excited by it that she decided it was too much for me emotionally. So she didn't give me any Chopin until quite late in life."

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“Well, how old were you?” Julie then inquired.

“Oh, about nine,” I said, and Julie roared.

“What’s so funny?” I asked.

“So you were an old man of nine when you first got Chopin!” she said.

I'm a cigarette box that plays "Humoresque"—
The Dvorak one I mean.
But to add to it, a coda I writ;
Alas, poor Antonin!



The History of Music Boxes

ALTHOUGH THE HISTORY of the music box goes back only to the last part of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth, there is still much confusion surrounding the whole matter.

There is no doubt that Switzerland was the fatherland of these mechanical music makers, but there's quite a question about just which part of the country was responsible for its creation. The two contenders for the title are Geneva and the Vallée de

Joux, which is about 30 miles north of its competitor and which lies along the Lake de Joux near the French border.

The exact date when the music box made its appearance is also something for conjecture, but that's a fairly small matter, for it seems to have been developed sometime in the 1780's or 1790's.

However, before sorting out the wheres and whens, I'd like to go several centuries further back to the hows of the music box. The primary how is the pin-studded cylinder, the invention of which made possible the creation of mechanical music. According to Alfred Chapuis' *Histoire de la Boite à Musique et de la Musique Mécanique*, this kind of cylinder was first applied to carillons, which by the fifteenth century were playing away merrily in northern France, Flanders, Holland, and Germany.

The general principle of both early and later carillons was the same—namely, that the pins on the cylinder worked an attachment that made a hammer strike a bell. Tunes were changed by putting in new pins or by changing the cylinders. Then finally someone came up with the idea of shifting the cylinder slightly sidewise to play a new tune. However, this sort of arrangement was pretty rare and Chapuis, who covers the whole situation very thoroughly, knows of only one carillon clock that used a shifting

cylinder—the old carillon in St. Peter's Cathedral in Geneva. The clock was commissioned in 1748. Its carillon consisted of eight flattish bells set on a rod, like plates stacked sidewise (the same arrangement that was used in home-sized musical clocks) and it played a different tune for each day of the week. The cylinder was simply moved on its axis to change it from one tune to another.

The idea was wonderful, but the carillon had political problems. The Genevans changed the tunes during the Genevan Revolution in 1793. Then they switched melodies again when the Republic of Geneva was annexed to France in 1798, and they kept at it during the French Empire and the Restoration. So in 1827, the poor clock, by this time reduced to a state of utter confusion, stopped.

Maybe it had no interest in continuing its efforts in view of the death sentence handed down by the Genevan Society of Art's Mechanical Committee. This group, rather ungratefully it seems to me, decided in 1821 to have the clock done away with. By that time the citizens, already well along in the music box industry, had become quite sophisticated where music makers were concerned and were beginning to look down on their once-honored timepiece.

But there was a pro-clock faction, too, and Chapuis reports that in 1847 one of its defenders left

money in his will to have the clock restored. The job was done by two music box makers and the clock kept on going through the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth, finally stopping permanently in 1930. (Its mechanism is still preserved in the Museum of History and Art in Geneva.)

While various carillon clocks were singing out their melodies from high towers, clockmakers got to work and applied the same principle to clocks for the home. These early musical clocks for houses—or castles—appeared on the scene in the seventeenth century in Flanders and northern France, and were quite a specialty in England.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, there were all kinds of home-sized carillon clocks—clocks with flutes, clocks with organ mechanisms, and clocks with automatons. One of them, the famed “du Berger,” made by the master Swiss clockmaker Pierre Jaquet-Droz, has practically everything: a flute-playing shepherd, a barking dog, bleating sheep, two cherubs see-sawing to music, a bowing lady, and a cherub with a singing bird in his hand. This clock was bought by King Ferdinand VI of Spain and is now in the National Palace in Madrid.

Jaquet-Droz was a master at turning out such things, and his crowning musical achievement came in 1774 when he and his son, Henri Louis, produced

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the automaton, "The Musician." This is a beautiful life-sized lady who actually plays the organ at which she is seated, and then rises to bow as if in answer to applause.

Jaquet-Droz, Père, is also credited with the invention of the mechanical singing bird, although larger mechanical singing birds may have been made in Germany in the fourteenth century. But Jaquet-Droz is certainly the man who made them popular. Although the mechanical birds sing very charmingly, I for one have never been able to get too excited about them. Unlike the emperor in Hans Christian Andersen's well-known story, "The Nightingale," I've always been much more enthusiastic about the real thing. However, it's not surprising that the emperor in Andersen's story was so entranced by the mechanical nightingale. All of the mechanical marvels of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—the musical clocks and watches, the fancy snuffboxes, automatons, barrel organs, and other automatic musical instruments—must have had something of the same impact on the people of those days as television has had on us much more recently. And just as famous writers and musicians have been commissioned to write plays and operas especially for TV, so great composers like Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven wrote works

for automatic music makers—usually on commission.

Let me make it clear at this point that none of these compositions was for the music box. Bach is supposed, for instance, to have written some little pieces for a musical clock, while Haydn also wrote for a musical clock with organ works—as well as for pieces of furniture with much more elaborate organ mechanisms.

In fact, according to Chapuis, only one of the three clocks that Haydn wrote for is a true clock. This one, which is still in existence, plays twelve of his compositions, some of which are arrangements of other works. Like the other two clocks it was made by P. Primitious Niemeez of Vienna, librarian for Prince Esterhazy, Haydn's patron and employer. Niemeez was a friend and student of Haydn's and was a composer as well as being talented at turning out mechanical creations.

Mozart wrote three pieces for strictly mechanical music makers. (Incidentally, there was a family precedent for this, since his father, Leopold Mozart, had also written pieces for a mechanical organ.) The first of the three, the *Fantasy in F Minor* (K.594), was written primarily because he wanted to give the payment to his wife. It was apparently intended for a clock with small pipes, and Mozart didn't enjoy

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writing it. But the second composition, which was in the same key, and whose original title is *Organ Piece for a Clock* (K.608) was an entirely different matter. It must have been intended for a much larger musical mechanism. It is mighty magnificent music.

The last of the three was an *Andante in F Major for a Cylinder in a Small Organ*. According to Mozart's biographer, Alfred Einstein, it was "written on three staves—all in the soprano clef" and "contains little passages of mechanical velocity that Mozart would have written quite differently for the piano."

Mozart also wrote a *Rondo in C* (K.617) for the glass harmonica or Armonica, accompanied by oboe, flute, viola, and cello. This instrument, invented by Benjamin Franklin, was not really mechanical, but it certainly was odd. Its mechanism was designed like that of the musical clocks and the Genevan carillon and consisted of glasses, of about the same shape as the flattish clock bells, which were set on a spindle placed horizontally in a case. A treadle made the spindle revolve so that the glasses were dipped and redipped in a basin of water. At first it was played by touching the wet edges of the glasses with the fingers. Later a keyboard may have been added.

And in *The Magic Flute* Mozart uses a bell-like accompaniment for a duet by Papageno and Papa-

gena. The music sounds exactly like a music box that plays two tunes—going back and forth, back and forth. Although the true music box probably hadn't yet appeared at that time, he might have gotten the idea from an old clock or an early musical snuff box.

Beethoven also wrote mechanical music. The *Battle Symphony* was written not only to commemorate Wellington's victory against the French at Victoria, but also to promote the Panharmonicom built by his friend J. N. Maelzel.

Maelzel, who was the son of an organ builder, and a musician as well as a mechanic, is chiefly remembered today for his metronome. Although he had made an earlier metronome (which he called the Chronometer), his final one was the same as the metronome invented by Winkel, a famed Dutch mechanical expert, except that Maelzel originated the graduated time scale, worked out in beats per minute, which enables composers to indicate almost exactly how fast or slowly they want their music to be played.

Earlier, Maelzel had come up with a fancy mechanical instrument which used flutes, trumpets, drums, cymbals, triangle, and strings and which played Mozart's, Haydn's, and Crescenti's works. His Panharmonicom was similar to the other me-

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chanical instrument, with the addition of clarinets, violins, and cellos, and it was worked by weights acting on cylinders.

As if this one didn't have enough sound effects, the second Panharmonicom—the one for which Beethoven wrote—was even more elaborate. Actually Maelzel is supposed to have sketched out the plan for the piece and, after it was written by Beethoven, the mechanical genius asked the composer to arrange the work for orchestra. It was to be played at a concert which the two of them were giving to raise money for a trip to London.

They got the finest musicians in Vienna together for the orchestra and on December 8, 1813, presented the Battle Symphony along with Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and two marches by other composers played by another Maelzel creation, a mechanical trumpeter. There was a second performance, and both were commercial successes, but they proved disastrous to the friendship. Beethoven objected to Maelzel's assumption that the Battle Symphony was his property, and the whole affair wound up in a lawsuit. Finally, though, it was settled amicably and the two were reconciled. Maelzel eventually came to the United States where he spent the rest of his life.

Some modern composers, like Stravinsky, have

put the effects of old-fashioned mechanical music in their works. The "Waltz in D Major" from Stravinsky's *Suite for Small Orchestra* gives a wonderful impression of a barrel organ with some of the notes missing. It really has the sound of a pair of antique bellows. He uses the effect of a barrel organ again in his ballet, *Petrouchka*.

But to get back to the development of the music box; the first small musical movements were in watches, which worked on the same principle as the ancient carillons and the musical clocks. That is, a pinned cylinder tripped a tiny hammer which struck the bells. The same kind of musical watch was made in France, in Geneva, and in England and this was the type of musical movement that was put into snuffboxes.

According to Chapuis, it was Antoine Favre of Geneva who first got the idea for a musical movement that didn't use the traditional hammer and bell arrangement. The notes were provided by steel blades or teeth—the forerunner of the comb—and were played by the pins of the cylinder. This was, of course, the method that was standard for music boxes until the much later invention of discs with projections underneath.

Favre was probably inspired by several mechanical factors, such as the fact that the bell-hammer-

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and-cylinder mechanism was very expensive and very delicate, and by the tendency in watch styles toward flatter models which would leave little room for a musical mechanism. Probably equally important was the political and economic situation in Geneva at the time, 1796.

The French were conducting a war of nerves against the Republic of Geneva and were reinforcing it by creating customs difficulties aimed especially at the watch- and clockmaking industry, which used many English supplies, including the very important tiny bronze bells which the English excelled in making. As a result, unemployment reached an all-time high, with nine out of ten workers in the industry out of work. To spur business, the manufacturers tried to turn out salable novelties.

In the middle of all this Favre appeared before the Genevan Society of Arts with a white iron box containing his new invention. And although the Society did give him a gratuity, it came up with a masterpiece of understatement about his idea—that it could be useful to the watchmaking industry.

Now for the contentions of the Vallée de Joux. In his book *The Curious History of Music Boxes*, Roy Mosoriak quotes L. G. Jaccard as saying unequivocally that the place of origin of the music box was the Vallée de Joux. Jaccard adds that the La

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Vallée instruments, called "*carillons à musique*" were usually set in watches. They had a brass platform inset with pins which acted as levers in contact with a few steel prongs or teeth tuned to a scale.

Whether these were the first musical movements using teeth is clearly a matter for debate, but it is certain that this type of movement was made. There were also movements that had discs with pins at the edge and these pins "pricked" the teeth or blades.

However and wherever it got started and whoever was really responsible, the industry began to get underway in the early 1800's and by 1812, Chapuis says, 172 workers out of the 814 Genevan watchmakers were already busy with it. Both Geneva and the Vallée soon began to cooperate pretty closely, and craftsmen from the Lake area came to Geneva to work in the new industry.

But while various Swiss were adding their bit to the improvement of the music box, the French gave it a powerful push toward world-wide recognition. The industry's first real success came when Napoleon ordered gold snuffboxes (whose musical movements played Tyrolean tunes) as gifts for his generals after the Austrian campaign in 1809.

By 1814, with musical movements playing merrily away in seals, canes, rings, various other pieces of jewelry, and small cases, François Lecoultré hit upon

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the idea of making the musical teeth, which had been put together one by one or in groups of two or three, all on one comb. (The cylinder had by this time been replaced with a disc mechanism in watches, and by 1815 the watch and music box industries had separated.) In 1820, Antoine Lecoultre was manufacturing these one-piece combs in Sentier in the Vallée de Joux for most of the music box makers. The cartel or large cylinder music box appeared on the scene around this time, and the music box with interchangeable cylinders appeared in about 1850.

But 1815 was a very happy year, both for Geneva and for the music box industry. It was then, after the final fall of the Empire, that Geneva became independent again, and although Napoleon's ordering the musical snuffboxes had been a big help to music box makers, his defeat at Waterloo was even more helpful.

For one thing, the Genevans could finally concentrate on music boxes instead of politics, and for another, many English tourists began coming to Switzerland. Undoubtedly they were drawn there for the same reasons that bring visitors to that magnificent country today—and a number of those early English travelers took music boxes home with them as

souvenirs, as did other visitors from all over the Continent.

When Julie and I left Switzerland after a visit, three modern music boxes and a cuckoo clock left with us. When we got to the Italian border, we were examined by the Italian *Guardia di Finanza*, who asked if we were bringing anything from Switzerland. Since at that point the four small music makers were packed away in a box in the trunk of the car, I had completely forgotten about them. But when the customs inspector examined the trunk, he spotted the box and gave it an exploratory tap, whereupon all four began performing in unison.

They created a thoroughly original musical effect and my own emotions were divided between amusement at the whacky serenade and embarrassment at not having remembered them. I doubted that the customs inspector considered the incident very funny. Nevertheless, he gallantly invited us to proceed. So with full musical accompaniment, we entered the land of Verdi, Puccini, Bellini, and Paganini.

The movements of these modern music boxes came neither from Geneva nor from the Vallée, but from Ste. Croix, which is the center of the industry today and which began making music boxes in about 1811. The Genevans, however, did not suffer from

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this new development. In fact, their music box business was booming and Chapuis quotes a Genevan author who calls the period from 1815 to 1842 "twenty-seven years of happiness."

While Switzerland was the home of the music box and continued to be its headquarters, music boxes were being made in other places. The French produced musical dolls, boxes, and clocks. And both disc and cylinder boxes were made in Cologne, Vienna, and Prague.

Naturally, they too were sold all over the world. In fact, Chapuis tells an amusing story about the buying of one Swiss music box. This box now sits in the Museum of Art and History in Neuchâtel and was a gift from Willy Russ-Suchard, grandson of Philippe Suchard, founder of the famed chocolate company. His grandfather was in the United States during the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, saw the music box, liked it, bought it and had it shipped to Serrières, near Neuchâtel. When it arrived he made the sad discovery that it had been made in Ste. Croix, less than 30 miles away, and that by taking a short trip, he could have had the same music box—*sans* charges for customs duties and for transportation between the United States and Switzerland.

But music boxes went to much more exotic

places than Philadelphia—to Persia, China, Japan and India—following in the paths of the fancy and fantastic musical clocks, which had been a favorite gift of early European traders to Oriental dignitaries. In fact, the famed eighteenth century English clockmaker, James Cox, who specialized in musical and automatic clocks, was commissioned by the British East India Company to turn out the most fabulous creations he could devise for just this purpose. They must have been quite something, judging from one example which features, among other things, a river scene with simulated flowing water and boats moving under a fancy bridge on which there are rows of moving figures.

Everything had been going along smoothly and profitably for the music box industry when the Germans revolutionized it in 1885 with the disc music box. Paul Lochman of Gohlis, near Leipzig, introduced the first of these with his Symphonion, although he may not have originated the idea. And soon afterward the Polyphon Company of Leipzig also began making disc boxes.

One of the big attractions of these boxes was the fact that discs of popular tunes could be rushed into production—and into the homes of music box owners. As a result, not only the home models but also the coin-operated types (which appeared a little

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later in such public places as restaurants, tea rooms, saloons, and in German railway stations) came into vogue quite easily.

Those early juke boxes weren't automatic, and strange as it may seem to us, the proprietors didn't seem to mind strolling over and changing discs when a customer wanted a different tune. There was more time and less money in those days.

Our Polyphon, which is the pay-as-you-hear type, has its operating instructions printed in Dutch: *Man werpe een centstuk in de gleuf*. It may have once provided the musical entertainment in one of those charming little bars which are so omnipresent in Holland and in which the accompaniment now comes from rather honky-tonkyish pianos.

Eventually, of course, there were disc boxes that changed automatically. They were invented by Gustave Brachhausen, who had been one of the Polyphon partners. He came to the United States in 1889 and set up his Regina factory in Jersey City, New Jersey. In 1894 he moved to Rahway, and three years later, whether inspired by American interest in mechanical inventions, or by competition in the music box industry, he came up with the automatic disc changer.

The chief Regina in our collection is not an automatic changer, but is one of the nicest-sounding

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Reginas that I have heard. I call it the ugly duckling with the beautiful voice, since it is housed in a very undistinguished wooden case, of the size designed to be set on a living-room table. A few of the Reginas that I've listened to have had a tinny tone and have been out of tune in a disorganized rather than an organized way. But this one has such a lovely, rich sound that when I made the recent recording of my music boxes for RCA Victor, I played a number of its discs.

Julie bought this Regina in Lord & Taylor's "Going, Going, Gone Shop"—and it happened in a rather round-about way. This shop, which has since been discontinued, had the very interesting sales policy of reducing unsold merchandise 10 per cent every week. Julie had been visiting it occasionally, following the declining fortunes of another music box—a big juke box disc type. Her checking had been rather casual, though, since she believed that no one else could possibly be interested in it besides herself.

But she found out that she was wrong, because one day when she returned to note its further deflation, she discovered that someone else had been very interested. The box had disappeared! (Not too long afterward, she picked up a magazine and there was a big article about the "Going, Going, Gone Shop.")

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The most prominent thing in the whole layout was a picture of the missing music box, which had been snapped up by a man in the Midwest for his game room.)

Figuring that what Lord & Taylor had had once, it might have again, Julie revisited the scene of her defeat and spotted the Regina. In spite of its unglamorous appearance, she grabbed it. And I was delighted to add it to the collection.

Its forty discs span quite a period: historically, from the Civil War to pre-World War I, and musically, from the ballad to the blues. In fact, one of its discs is "The Memphis Blues" which wasn't written until 1909 and which may have been a later addition to its repertoire.

It also offers "Good-bye My Bluebell," "Every Little Moment" and some Strauss waltzes, including *Roses from the South*. That last selection alone makes it rather unusual, since *The Blue Danube* is Strauss's all-time music box hit.

The popularity of the German and American disc music boxes had a definite effect on the sale of Swiss cylinder boxes, and ten years after the introduction of the disc, the Swiss firm of Mermod Frères in Ste. Croix came up with the Stella. It was soon followed by a number of other Swiss disc boxes, just as the

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Regina was followed by a number of American-made disc boxes.

At the turn of the century, both cylinder and disc music boxes played happily away in countless homes, unaware that their days had been numbered ever since Edison's invention of the phonograph in 1877. In 1902 the Regina people began making a combination music box and phonograph, the Reginaphone, but it was short-lived. They discontinued it in 1907. By about 1910 the popularity of the music box was waning and in 1912 the Regina company gave up music boxes and converted to phonographs. (They had cannily gone into the vacuum cleaner business a few years before and are, as a matter of fact, still making floor polishing and cleaning equipment.)

In 1914 the Polyphon works shut down. So the music box, which had had its origin in the period of the Napoleonic wars, went into its decline at the beginning of the First World War.

The Regina company did keep on making music box discs until about 1917 when Maurice Chaillet, a member of the firm's sales department and son of Octave Chaillet, who had been the company's musical arranger, bought out the remaining music box parts and the disc-making machinery. Chaillet continued to manufacture discs until 1941, when Lloyd G. Kelley purchased the equipment from him.

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Regina discs are still being made by Mr. Kelley up in Hanover, Massachusetts.

Although there are many novelty music boxes made in Switzerland and Japan today, the day of the widespread music box industry has definitely departed—an industry which in the beginning had made such fabulous items as golden harps decorated with enamel and pearls, violins with golden strings held by diamond-decorated pegs, musical watches with animated scenes, wonderful-sounding big boxes, some of which had four springs and could play for over two hours without stopping, and which later developed disc boxes with automatic changers, and all the other marvels of the music box era.

But in a way, I guess the music box was lucky. Its renaissance began only about thirty years after its demise.

I'm only a little powder box
And if opened up just so
You'll hear four bars of Rose Marie;
I'm afraid that's all I know!



My Favorite Music Boxes

TRYING TO CHOOSE my favorite music boxes is a little like a connoisseur trying to name his favorite wine. They've all been selected with the same care, and each has a special flavor of its own. They are all very special. But if I must make a choice, there are a few which, either because of sheer virtuosity or interesting personality quirks, I will call my favorites.

Among the irresistible members of the collection are the beautiful Swiss box on its own table whose

tone is the music box equivalent of a Stradivarius or a Steinway, the enormous old juke box that has probably towered over innumerable Saturday night barroom brawls, and its smaller cousin whose extremely complicated arrangement of "Lead Kindly Light" may have calmed the repentant sinner on Sunday. There are others, too, whose exceptionally beautiful or unusually strident tones have gained a special spot in my heart.

It was Julie who found the Swiss "Strad" for me one day about five years ago in Boston. The box was the prize she bagged after a hunt that would have done credit to any big game expert in Africa. The chase began in a downtown Boston antique shop where she engaged in a little preliminary stalking just to see if she could stir up some interesting game. After examining practically the whole stock, she managed to discover only one musical decanter which was quickly ruled out as a possible addition to the collection on the grounds that we already owned quite a few.

Finally convinced that she had given up, the proprietor mentioned that he did know of an interesting music box that might possibly be just what she was looking for. This, he added, would be a little difficult to get at since it was in a suburban antique shop, but it was well worth a look. Having

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first checked to make sure that the shop was open, Julie set out in a taxi and, after what seemed to be an endless ride, found herself on a dreary street in a depressingly dingy suburb that had long since relinquished any fashionable pretensions it may once have had. There, in a frowsy unpainted frame house, decorated with the turrets, domes, and inevitable bay window so popular in the 1870's, was the antique shop.

Julie almost asked the taxi driver to turn right around. But having undertaken the safari, she decided to follow through. Very tentatively, she rang the bell. The dealer answered; and, as the door opened, Julie spotted her quarry. It was the Swiss box, in gleamingly good condition and beautiful voice. Everything about it—cabinet, mechanism and seven extra rolls—was perfect. So perfect that it might have come straight out of the factory.

Actually, it came out about eighty years ago, making its debut in Geneva under the sponsorship of Samuel Troll, Fils. But wherever it spent the intervening years, it must have led a well-sheltered life. And whoever was doing the sheltering must have treasured it for its looks as well as for its tone. The case is made of cherry, and on the lid is an inlaid design of musical instruments. Inside the case, there is a small painting of a Swiss Alpine scene,

and as a final decorative touch, the case is finished off with ivory locks. In honor of Julie's trek, we have named it the Boston box.

The Boston box has a special place of honor in the upstairs hallway right outside our bedroom door. I selected this particular niche because it contains no carpeting to muffle the box's lovely voice. The effect is wonderful; when it is playing, the music fills all the rooms of Stornello. For although the Boston box doesn't have a loud sound, it does have a penetrating one, and while it's presenting a concert, everyone in the house has to listen. It just can't be ignored. Its bass is so strong that it sounds like a chamber orchestra, and all of its cylinders emphasize the low notes. Comparing its tone to the sound of most music boxes is like comparing a grand piano to a spinet. This music box has almost as many notes as a piano: its range covers more than six octaves, from the F that is an octave and a fifth below Middle C to the C that is the last note on the keyboard. As you can see, this is no "tinkling" music box.

It is not surprising that the Boston box has this kind of range when you consider its size, for it is a large enough piece of furniture to house eight 18-inch cylinders. The top part, or "business end," which houses the works, is more than 3 feet long, over a foot wide, and $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches high. The table

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half is almost 4 feet long, more than 2 feet wide, and about 27 inches high.

As an added attraction, this music box has its program of forty-eight selections engraved on a silver plate set inside the cover. Most music boxes are content with a modest cardboard card, while some—at least at this late date—have no program at all and it's up to the listener to come to his own conclusions about what he's hearing.

Although the Boston box is basically in the key of B flat major, several of the cylinders are in three keys—B flat, E flat, and C minor, the relative minor of E flat. One roll goes so far as to play all of its tunes in E flat. The anonymous person who made the combs for this box was in his own way almost as careful a craftsman as Antonio Stradivarius, for the Boston box has the kind of beautiful tone found only in the finest musical instruments. That long-gone comb-maker was a good musician. And so was the person who did the arrangements for the compositions.

Practically everything that a music box can manage, this box does: runs, trills and *tremolo*, full bass, and double notes. You can practically hear the coloratura trilling in top form in its version of Rosina's aria "Una voce poco fa" from *The Barber of Seville*, and its "William Tell Overture" is a masterpiece of

musical complication. The cylinders on this box seem to be exerting as much energy on their performance as any instrumentalist giving his first New York recital. Whether a cylinder is playing the "Soldiers' Chorus" from Gounod's *Faust*, or a now rather obscure but once wildly popular number called "When the Swallows Homeward Fly" by Franz Abt, the combs are kept working all the time, showing the music box off to the fullest.

Another thing that intrigues me about this box is its combination of composers. People like Gounod, Offenbach, and Verdi are set side by side with Abt, Jacob Blumenthal (whose waltz, "Les Oiseaux," gets a very elaborate arrangement), and Josef Labitsky, represented by a mazurka called "Souvenir D'Arlay." But to many people of their time, these men were just as well known as Gounod, Offenbach, and Verdi. Blumenthal was pianist to Queen Victoria, Labitsky was a well-known dance composer who, by 1835, was famous all over Europe, and Abt's vocal works were sung throughout the world.

The aria "D'Egitto là sui lidi" from *Nabucco*, Verdi's first successful opera, is in the Boston's repertoire. As a matter of fact, Verdi is the box's most popular composer. He's on the program with the "Miserere" from *Il Trovatore*, "O Tu Palermo" from *I Vespri Siciliani*, the chorus "Signore del

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tetto" from *Jerusalem*, and the prelude to the first act of *La Traviata*.

It seems incredible today, but when *Traviata* was first heard at Venice's Teatro Fenice on March 6, 1853, the opera was, in Verdi's own words, "*un fiasco*." Judging from descriptions of that night, he couldn't have been more accurate. The tenor (Alfredo) had a cold that made him so hoarse he could hardly be heard. The baritone pouted because he felt that his role as Alfredo's father was a secondary one. So he refused to do any acting, and virtually the only move he made on stage was the absolutely imperative one of opening his mouth.

These two were bad enough but the real *disastro* was Violetta. The role of the frail heroine was sung by Mme. Donatelli, who must have spent a lot more time eating pasta than coughing. She has been described clearly and succinctly as "one of the stoutest ladies on or off the stage." So when, at the beginning of the third act, the doctor announced in tragic tones that poor Violetta was so wasted away by consumption that she had only a few hours left, the audience howled hysterically.

Unfortunately there's no Puccini on the Boston box. He came along too late to be elected, but Bellini is included. Arias from *La Sonnambula*, *I Puri-*

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tani, and the famed "Casta Diva" from *Norma* are all on the program.

Nor is Meyerbeer, composer of *Robert*, the music box clock, neglected. But the Boston box, with fine tact, leaves *Robert le Diable* to the timepiece, and plays instead an aria from *L'Africaine*. Although I believe the Boston's comb-maker came from Italy, the box itself was made in the French-oriented part of Switzerland, which may account for the fact that composers of French opera outnumber their Italian cousins.

In addition to Meyerbeer, who was actually born in Germany but whose success was with French opera, Auber is on hand with a selection from *Masaniello*, Offenbach is present and accounted for with excerpts from *La Vie Parisienne*, *Orphée aux Enfers*, and *The Grand Duchess of Gérolstein*, there is a second selection from *Faust*, and Jacques Halévy is represented with Eleazar's famous dramatic aria, "Rachel! quand du Seigneur la grâce tutélaire" from *La Juive*. Caruso sang this aria in his farewell performance at the Metropolitan Opera on Christmas Eve, 1920. And I might add in passing that the opera's composer was Gounod's counterpoint teacher at the Paris Conservatory. Offenbach, too, attended that august institution, although at the time he was a rather ordinary cellist. But when he started writ-

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ting music, he became a dynamo, turning out ninety light operas in twenty-five years!

Although I don't know who was responsible for choosing the operatic selections for the Boston box, I certainly congratulate him. Bellini, Rossini, Meyerbeer, Gounod, Offenbach, early Verdi, and a few others who don't happen to be played here, such as Mozart and Donizetti, are exactly the men I would have chosen. Their arias have a sheer down-to-earth simplicity in melody that is perfect for music boxes.

Although it's beginning to sound as though the Boston box is the Stornello sub-station of the Met, La Scala, or the Paris Opera, this isn't quite the case. It does play pieces that are strictly instrumental in origin. In addition, it has a roll of popular songs, a roll devoted exclusively to hymns, and, here and there, some patriotic songs. While "The Star-Spangled Banner" is neglected, "America" and the Civil War song, "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp" are featured together with "La Marseillaise."

The Boston box's hymn arrangements are just as elaborate as its operatic ones. The cylinder that plays, in addition to "Nearer My God to Thee," such famed religious songs as "Old Hundred" ("Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow"), "Rock of Ages," and one carol, "Adeste Fidelis," has its own "signature." Everything ends with a good long

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"amen," but this is no ordinarily drawn-out "amen." First the box plays the "a" syllable, following it with a tremendous run; then it plays the "men" syllable, and finishes that off with an even longer run that finally ends the word—and the hymn.

When I talk about this music box and think of the many people who must have listened to it, I begin to wish I knew which proper Bostonian parlor once housed it. I like to imagine that it ornamented the sitting-room of some elegant Beacon Hill residence, providing the musical accompaniment for activities that may have included a casual morning call, an elegant afternoon tea, or a literary evening. But maybe it once sat among the splendid bric-a-brac in the home of some early Pennsylvania oil millionaire, or perhaps it entertained one of the first railroad magnates. I'll never know. My other music box set on its own table has a distinct advantage over the Boston box. I *do* know where it came from. I call it the Billy box because its donor was our good friend, W. T. Grant. He gave it to me as a birthday gift in 1954.

I had long admired the box, which had been a member of the Grant household for a number of years. The morning of my birthday, Billy sent it over. When he arrived at Stornello for the celebra-

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tion, I told him that I knew how fond he was of the box, and I simply didn't see how I could accept it. But Billy reassured me by replying, "Oh, hell, Alec, I don't want the old thing anyway." So the box is doubly valued, for I knew he was parting with a treasured possession.

Now the box sits proudly in the corner of our living room in an appropriate setting for this Swiss gem with its rosewood case and intricate mechanism. It was made by Paillard, a firm which is still in existence but now produces, among other things, typewriters. Although the Billy box is pretty much the same size as the Boston, it has four cylinders, each playing six tunes, compared to the Boston's eight, and so its repertoire is just half as extensive.

Billy's key is a low G, and although I get rather tired of hearing the key of G on so many modern boxes, I like it here because it's a slightly altered version of the basic key and because, in addition, the box goes in for some ultra-elaborate effects. That slightly off-key G gives it a nice old-fashioned flavor.

The Billy box also has an interesting little effect that I've heard on other music boxes—a sort of "whup-whup-who" sound which is best described as a wheeze. This could be caused by a small maladjustment in its insides, but I refuse to have it diagnosed or treated. I like it just the way it is.

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The Billy box has no program card, which is unfortunate because many of the songs it preserves for posterity wouldn't even be recognized by my friend, the professor of Romance languages. There's a roll of waltzes, for example, most of which are as obscure as the memories of the curvaceous ladies and gallant gentlemen who once twirled in time to their strains. *The Blue Danube* is completely neglected, although there are several recognizable selections by the younger Johann Strauss. Waldteufel, composer of *The Skaters' Waltz*, is another identifiable contributor to this roll. But all the others are anonymous tunes that whirl for an instant into our modern ears, then rush back to the earlier day that created them.

Among the operatic selections played by the Billy box are "Stride la vampa" from *Il Trovatore*, and the end of the second act of *I Puritani*. This box also has the distinction of playing "White Wings," the title of which completely puzzled me the first time I heard it. At a Hollywood party, I was introduced to a lady and told, "Her father wrote 'White Wings.'" Since this was before the Billy box joined the family, I wondered, "What the devil is 'White Wings'?", going through some intense mental gymnastics trying to classify it either as a literary, musical, or movie title. During the course of the evening

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she sang the song and I was told that the lady's father was Banks Winter, who copyrighted "White Wings" in 1884. I even learned the words:

White Wings, they never grow weary,
They carry me cheerily over the sea;
Night comes, I long for my dearie,
I'll spread out my White Wings
And sail home to thee!

It's pieces like this one that make music boxes so much fun for me.

Although our important boxes are much too large to travel with us when we're on tour, we do manage to have a few small music boxes on hand as we move around. One of them is Julie's compact, which performs a very nice version of Brahms's A flat Waltz—in F sharp. Julie also takes along a little powder box that plays "I Love You Truly" and "Let Me Call You Sweetheart." This, I would say, is the original version of that now extensive list of music for various activities, which began with "Music for Lovers Only."

One box I'd love to take along if it weren't so bulky is the Butterfly box. This is a rosewood chest about a foot wide, a little over 2 feet long and 10½ inches high, and it sits on the carpet under one of the pianos in the living-room. I'd like to put it on a

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table but there just isn't any unoccupied space to accommodate it.

This box has the number three spot in the Templeton music box popularity poll, and one of its charms is the way I got it. It was in 1939, when I had a half-hour radio show, "Alec Templeton Time," over NBC in Chicago. That year one of the shows fell on Christmas Day, and we rehearsed extra carefully, because it was to be a special show. During a dress rehearsal, the sound engineers said to me, "Would you mind stepping out of the studio for a moment? We have to check on some equipment."

So I went into another studio for a few moments, and then they called me back to finish the rehearsal. This happened twice, because there were two dress rehearsals for the Christmas show. On the day of the broadcast, when we came to that point in the program, the announcer said, "We have now come to the unrehearsed portion of the program that Alec Templeton doesn't know about yet. We have learned that Alec is particularly fond of music boxes, and our sponsors, the makers of Alka-Seltzer, which contains an analgesic sodium acetyl salicylate, would like to present him with a genuine antique music box."

And then they played the Butterfly box. It received its name because of its set of five bells which are struck by delicate metal butterflies. The bells,

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however, are far from delicate. They sound exactly like old telephone bells, clanging along with a strong "ding-ding-ding-ding-ding." Apparently they were simply strung together and stuck in with no thought of tune, tone, or anything else related to music, except keeping time and increasing the volume. This Swiss box also has a tiny drum, but it hardly makes an impression when those bells are going. Their competition is just too much for the drum. In addition to having butterfly bell ringers, there must be another butterfly somewhere inside, because the box has an interesting mechanical aberration. Suddenly about four bars before the end of each tune, the notes completely fade away. Then they return, loud and clear, just in time for the grand finale.

Once, the box developed an even more serious ailment and refused to run at all. I took it to a repair man and he pronounced its death sentence, insisting that there was absolutely no point in trying to do anything about it. Refusing to accept this dire declaration, I found another more humanitarian music box expert who made it go again. He didn't tamper with the fade-out, though; I had carefully cautioned him that getting rid of that would ruin the box's personality as far as I was concerned. The Butterfly has undoubtedly had butterflies for a very long time.

Alec Templeton's Music Boxes

Another reason why I'm partial to the Butterfly box is that its program as well as its mechanism is slightly unusual. This music box has the distinction of being one of the two in our collection that plays Gilbert and Sullivan. Perhaps the reason this famed team was so neglected by music box makers was that they were such a battling duo. Gilbert may very well have raised Cain because his words could not be reproduced, while Sir Arthur was doubtless delighted that his music could be. The Butterfly, however, does offer two songs from *The Grand Duke*, composed by the team in 1896, between their first and second (and final) falling out. The songs are "So Ends My Dream" and "The Prince of Monte Carlo."

The Grand Duke is one of the more obscure Gilbert and Sullivan works, but compared to the other compositions in this music box's repertoire, it's a world-wide hit. When I first heard these two on the Butterfly's program, I had no idea which Gilbert and Sullivan songs they were. But I definitely knew they were "G and S," because their style is unmistakably recognizable, even though the operetta isn't. As for the rest of the music of the Butterfly, I didn't recognize one single tune. Its repertoire contains such numbers as "Sister Mary Jane," but whose sister Mary Jane was, I have absolutely no idea; "Let's



Rembrandt, Gretel, and I under the bells of Stornello

*The Symphonion and some of its smaller companions, including
Old King Cole, Mozart's piano, and two of Julie's powder boxes*

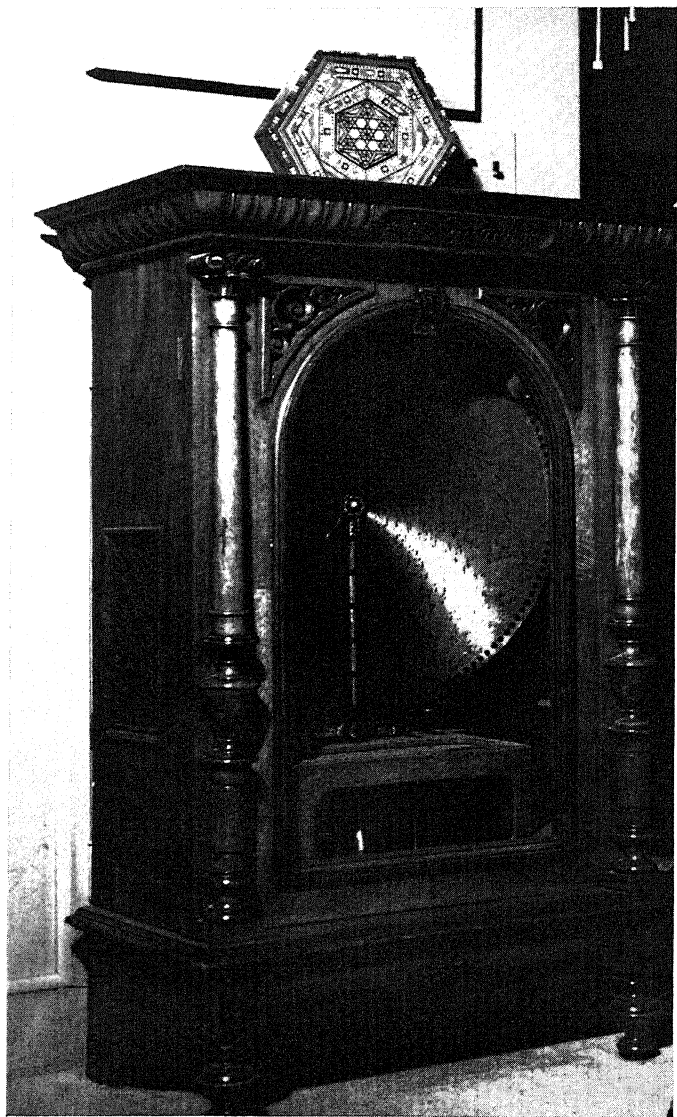


*Julie and I relax and
listen to our music
boxes*



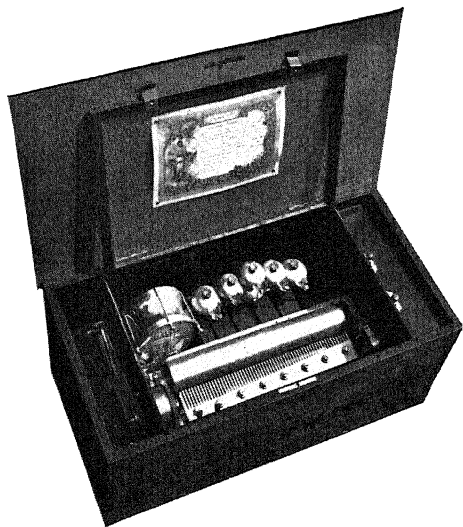
*I play an accompa-
niment to Gerry's
aria*





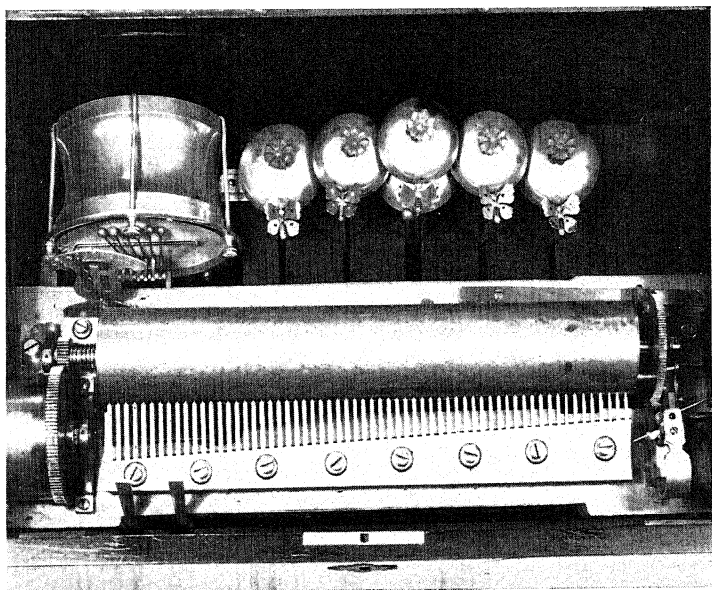
(photo courtesy RCA Victor)

The Polyphon



The Butterfly box

Close-up of the "innards" of the Butterfly







*A hand-painted porcelain
miniature is set in the lid*



*"The Parade of the
Wooden Soldiers"*



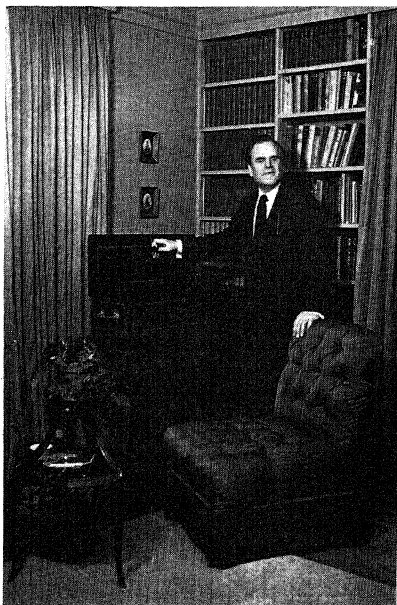
*The lid of this one
is engraved silver*

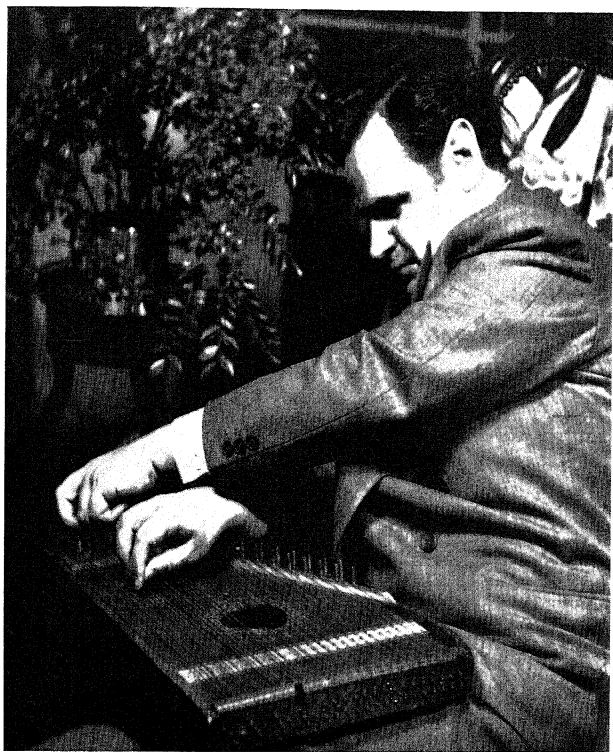
THREE OF MY SMALL MUSIC BOXES (photographed in the garden)

*I'm holding the Japanese house
that plays an old Greek tune;
and that's an Italian hurdy-
gurdy in my other hand*

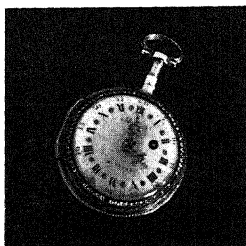


*The Billy box on its own
matching table*

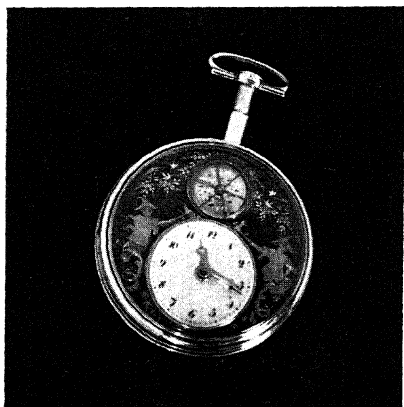




The zither that came in a shirt box

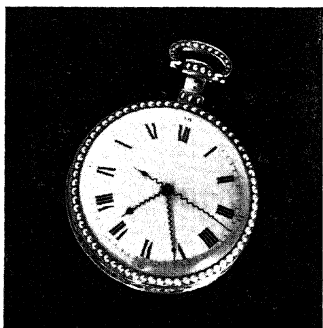


*Marcasite and
enamel repeater*

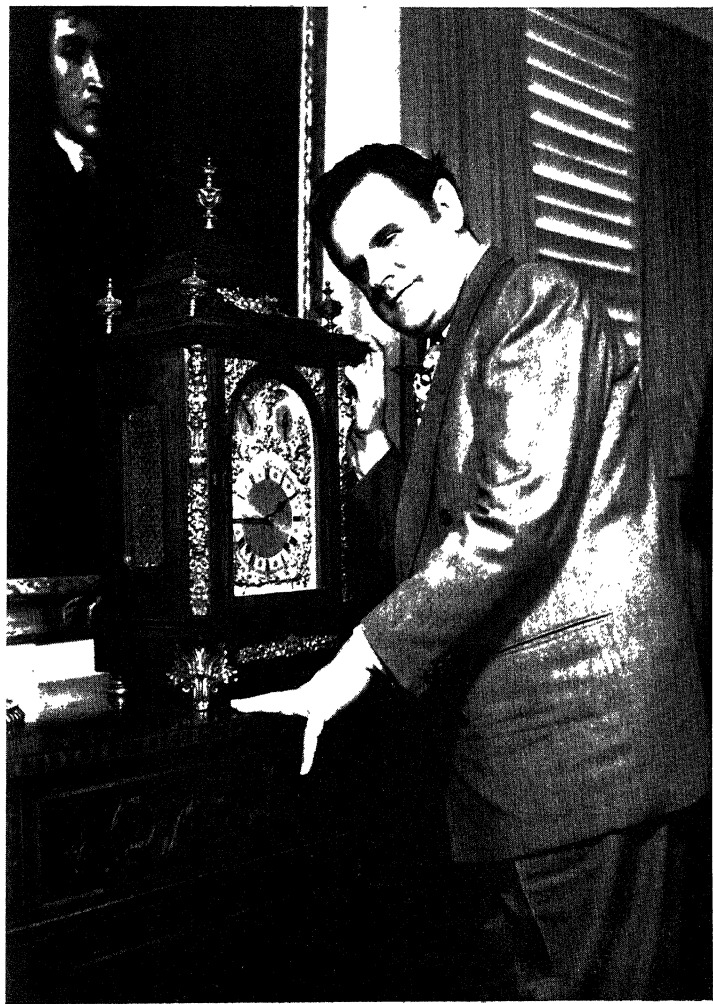


The San Marco

Pearl-encrusted, hand-enamelled music box repeater

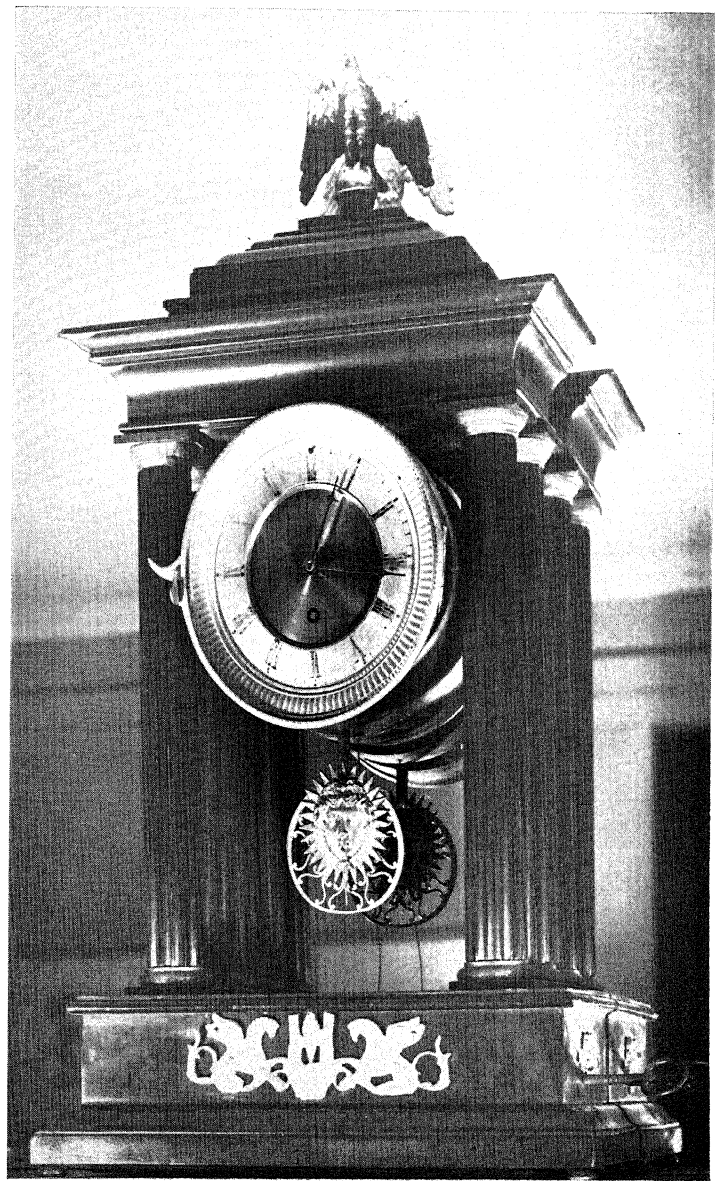


Listening to the chimes of the very old ormulo-decorated rosewood clock



Robert the Devil







In my pipe major's uniform of the Seaforth Highlanders



The two small Christmas music boxes I like the best



The Criterion from Iowa City

My Favorite Music Boxes

Be Sweethearts Again"; and "Susie Teensie," which could have been the most popular song of its day, but is now just an infrequently raised musical ghost.

Maybe "Susie Teensie" was a minstrel show tune and was blared out by the band as performers and musicians paraded up the main street of some sleepy Mississippi River town, while yelling youngsters followed along and their parents watched the excitement from the porches of their white frame homes. At any rate, it's a good, rousing melody to go with those rousing inharmonious bells. Not all music box bells are like the Butterfly's, however. Frequently they are right on key. Our German disc juke box, the Polyphon, has two built-in glockenspiels which are perfectly in tune with its combs.

The Miami box, a small chest which Julie found in a music store there, is the other Gilbert and Sullivan performer in our collection. This little music box chose one of the team's best known numbers, "The Paradox Song" from *The Pirates of Penzance*. If the Miami found its way to its former home town any time before the railroad was built in 1896, it may have arrived in a wagon drawn by a long team of mules with a driver cracking his whip artistically over their backs, a local sight that some Florida old-timers say accounts for calling the residents of that state and Georgia "crackers."

Alec Templeton's Music Boxes

It is appropriate that the box did make its home in Florida. This is a true Southern music box, playing the tribute to the Dixie songster, "Listen to the Mocking Bird," with the kind of runs and trills that would even out-do that feathered mimic. I'm almost as fond of the pseudonym of its composer, whose real name was Septimus Winner, as I am of the Miami's version of his song. Winner, who also wrote "Whispering Hope," used the unlikely name of Alice Hawthorne.

But whatever it plays, the Miami is full of all sorts of wonderful sounds, not the least of them being its version of "Comin' Through the Rye," which keeps repeating the melody of the title.

Certainly nobody can contend that the hymn whose title I've taken as the name for my "Lead Kindly Light" box is obscure. But this box's version of the hymn is such a production number that it sounds more like it stepped out of an opera house than a church pew. The box is a coin-operated disc type, a Euphonia, and it goes into so many variations on whatever theme is occupying its talents that the tunes all come out in a sort of eighteenth century spectacular version. Like the Boston box, it doesn't let any of its notes go to waste.

I found the Euphonia in Rochester and its discovery was really the result of my having appeared

My Favorite Music Boxes

as soloist with the orchestra there for nine consecutive years. The concerts were always on Sunday, so it was probably inevitable that any box connected with these appearances would be one whose forte was a hymn.

We had two delightful diversions on these Sundays. One was reading the newspaper from cover to cover, including the classified ads. The other was listening to "Pasquale, C.O.D.," an Italian version of "John's Other Wife." One Sunday we noticed an ad which read simply "FOR SALE—MUSIC BOX." So we went to the address given, and the box's owner, who ran a tiny little auto repair shop, was delighted to find a customer. We packed it in newspapers and tucked it carefully into the back of the car.

Although the Euphonia's dark mahogany case bound with brass corners gives it more the appearance of an old-fashioned steamer trunk than a music box, it has a tremendous tone. In fact, it's the loudest box we have. When played with the top up it could practically fill Carnegie Hall with its sound. Unfortunately, its talents aren't being fully exploited currently; we have to keep it in the pantry, all other available music box locations being occupied. Maybe it needs a new manager.

If it did start on a professional career, the "Lead Kindly Light" box would certainly succeed as an

accompanist, since it is one of those rare boxes that plays every piece slowly enough so that anybody can sing along with it. Some of the selections, such as the big tenor aria from Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, might be a little difficult for the average voice, but the Euphonia balances them nicely with things like "The Old Oaken Bucket" and "Someday I'll Wander Back Again."

Our full-throated representative from Rochester is in the same key—F sharp—and has about the same number of notes as the huge Criterion juke box that towers almost 8 feet into the air. But the two of them remind me of David and Goliath, because the Euphonia, although it's only about one-sixth the size of the Criterion, is at least twice as powerful vocally. Maybe Goliath was quieted by the excitement he may have witnessed, since I have my own suspicions about the sort of "house" he may once have lived in.

Be that as it may, the Criterion's décor is restrained enough; a chaste-looking little lyre is carved near the top, some curvy wooden grillework surrounds the circular glass door that covers its 21-inch discs, and the lyre motif is repeated below this.

The Criterion was a Christmas gift from a friend in 1945, and Julie had almost as much of a problem in logistics trying to usher it into the house surrepti-

My Favorite Music Boxes

tiously as the Allies had in planning the invasion of Normandy. She knew there was a radio concert that I planned to hear, and so she scheduled the delivery for shortly after the program was to begin, when she was sure I would be settled in the easy chair next to the radio in the living-room. But she was still afraid I would find out what was going on and kept urging me to turn up the radio concert I was listening to, complaining that she couldn't hear it. This came as quite a surprise to me, since her contention is usually exactly the opposite.

Finally the moving men managed to get the Criterion into the house and up the stairs with a minimum of commotion and I was duly surprised later in the day when I discovered it.

It was no mad scientist who was responsible for our monster Criterion but the Equitable Manufacturing Company in Iowa City, Iowa. Since it served as a juke box, it has precise directions printed on the side. They say, in part, "Pull the slide, insert a nickel and push forward slowly."

Whatever this box's original location may have been, its tunes are all-embracing, including such varied compositions as the "Grand March" from *Tannhäuser*, the "Isabella Waltz," the "Wing Dance Polka," and "Home, Sweet Home." There's also a little number titled "At a Georgia Camp Meeting,"

which was copyrighted as a march in 1897 and appeared as a song two years later. I guess 1897 was a good year for marches, because John Philip Sousa's "The Stars and Stripes Forever," which is on another Criterion disc, was written then.

One song that was copyrighted in 1898, "She Was Bred in Old Kentucky," must have been extremely popular since the Criterion has two discs of it. The "Mocking Bird" pops up here, too, as do *The Blue Danube*, "The Old Oaken Bucket," and "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep."

Moving from the monstrous to the miniature, another of my favorites is a Royal Doulton toby mug that we found in Canada. I'm fond of it because it plays a song that can still be heard in English pubs. The words, which express an international sentiment, are:

Come, landlord, fill the flowing bowl
Until it doth run over;
Come, landlord, fill the flowing bowl
Until it doth run over;
For tonight we'll merry, merry be,
For tonight we'll merry, merry be,
For tonight we'll merry, merry be,
And tomorrow we'll be sober!

My Favorite Music Boxes

One night during a recent cruise on a British ship to the Virgin Islands, we were having a song fest with some of the officers and other passengers, and "Come, Landlord" was a general favorite. And, I might add, so was the flowing bowl. The next day we stopped at St. Thomas, and Julie and I headed immediately for The Little Switzerland, a shop which specializes in clocks. Since Julie and I shop like "prowlers," before long we found ourselves in the dustiest corner of the store.

And to our surprise, there stood a big, dusty old music box. It bore a sign saying "Insert 10 cents here," and we did just that. The entire store was suddenly filled with sound, and just as suddenly our secluded corner was filled with curious people who, until the unexpected musical onslaught, had been absorbed in their individual purchases. In front of the box, in a glass enclosure, stood a little clown, who strummed a banjo, rolled his eyes, moved his head, and opened his mouth in song as the music played. The crowd was so delighted with him that they completely forgot about shopping. I'm sure the proprietors were glad to see us leave so that business could be resumed.

This incident reminded us of another mob scene we had unwittingly created on New York's 57th

Street. One afternoon, before Julie and I were married, we were strolling past the window of Henri Tappé's salon, when Julie's attention was attracted by an antique keyboard instrument surrounded by gorgeous ostrich feathers. It was a very tall upright instrument with a piano keyboard, and its strings, which were set vertically above and behind the keyboard, were entirely exposed. Our curiosity was too much for us and we decided to go in and inquire about the instrument.

Once inside, we realized that a fashion show was in progress. M. Tappé was displaying his new collection of evening gowns. We noticed one of his assistants whispering in his ear, and very shortly he walked over to us. Monsieur, in a thick Irish brogue, explained that the instrument came from his home where it was used for decorative purposes only, but that he himself knew very little about it. Very graciously, however, he offered to boost me into the window. A chair was quickly supplied, and I took my place among the ostrich feathers.

I started to play, and in less time than it takes to tell it, there was a crowd six deep on 57th Street in front of Tappé's window. When I had fully explored the instrument and was lifted out of the window and back into the shop, I found that the evening gown display had been temporarily forgotten.

My Favorite Music Boxes

The fashion show audience had become my audience. I thanked M. Tappé, and, in his best Bois de Belfast tones, he said, "Sure and you're entirely welcome, and God bless you."

On the wall is a picture
Of Johann Sebastian,
But the music box makers
On him pulled a nasty-un.
Instead of it playing
A lovely Bach tune-o
That one on the wall
Doesn't play his at all—
It's one writ by a
Feller named Gounod!!



What Makes a Music Box Go

AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, a music box is a better tranquilizer than a Miltown, but some boxes have such melodic idiosyncrasies that a musical psychiatrist might prescribe tranquilizers for a few of my tranquilizers.

Alec Templeton's Music Boxes

I can just imagine a music box "head shrinker"—or, more accurately, "case shrinker"—pinning a great big neurotic label on our cigarette box whose *Humoresque* adds two bars never dreamed of by Dvorak. I'm sure he'd also insist that the version of "The Sidewalks of New York" that skips the scene where "Me and Mamie O'Rourke trip the light fantastic" is out of touch with the realities of the composition, and would pronounce Robert to be badly maladjusted because his coda is strictly music box and not Meyerbeer. But a music box maker would diagnose these seeming deviations from the norm as mechanical, not musical.

Compositions for cylinder-type music boxes have to be arranged to fit the size of the cylinder. And all of the compositions for one cylinder must be the same length. The same thing is true of selections for discs; their length has to be adjusted to the size of the disc being used. While the composers would undoubtedly tear their hair if they could hear some of the cuts from and additions to their music, they would nevertheless have to realize that this kind of tampering is one of the realities of music box making.

Many edited selections will begin at the beginning but not play through to the end. This, however, is not always the case. We have a little modern disc-

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playing chest which, for some obscure reason known only to its maker, plays just the less familiar middle sections of *The Blue Danube* and the "Intermezzo" from *Cavalleria Rusticana*. These discs dam up the *Danube* and chop up the "Intermezzo." Maybe the manufacturer was, in a small way, going in for the kind of music appreciation course that, I am told, once used to be taught in some schools. Nevertheless, he saw to it that "Old Folks at Home" was played from beginning to end.

But to momentarily desert the music for the mechanics, music boxes are essentially very simple power-driven machines. A mainspring, which is wound with a handle (or in the small boxes with a key), provides the power; the tuned teeth of a steel comb furnish the notes; and the tiny pins on the cylinder or the projections underneath the discs play them.

In cylinder boxes, the cylinder revolves from front to back, and the pins come up and strike the teeth from underneath. The contact isn't quite as direct in disc boxes, since the projections hit one point of a small star-shaped wheel (called, appropriately, a star wheel); as one point is hit, the wheel turns and another of its points touches and plays the teeth of the comb. One type of disc box, the Swiss Stella, uses a slightly different method. The Stella discs have

holes but no projections, and these holes turn the star wheels. Except for the Stella, I think of these tiny pins or points as dainty fingers that pluck the teeth somewhat as a harpist plucks the strings of a harp.

To explain the whole process in Templetonian, you simply wind up the *dykestra* ("spring") which turns the cylinder or disc while the *angnacks* ("pins" or "projections") hit the teeth or the *gingni* ("star wheels"). And when they're all going, it makes a big *thwy* ("to-do"). I might add that you have to be very careful about the *dykestra*, the *angnacks*, and the *gingni*, because if you have to have them repaired, there's an even bigger *thwy*. The main thing, as I mentioned earlier, is—does it *zack* or doesn't it *zack*?

In a music box of any size, there's also a governor that controls the speed at which the cylinder or the disc revolves. In the cylinder boxes this is made of two pieces of metal like a miniature fan, and it works the same way, using air resistance to keep the mechanism from going too fast or too slow. It can be adjusted, too: putting the two blades together cuts down on the resistance and lets the mechanism play faster, while separating them has the opposite effect. Disc box governors are hidden away inside but work the same way.

What Makes a Music Box Go

I suspect that it may have been some quirk in the governor that made our Stella box go suddenly stark raving mad the first time I ever played her. Stella was a Christmas gift, so on Christmas morning I wound her up eagerly. She was playing along merrily when she suddenly began bouncing across the floor. This machine is not a tiny, delicate music box, but a chest about 3 feet long and 2 feet high, and she was a distinct menace to life, limb, and furniture as she leaped around the living-room. Not only that: she made the darndest noise; it sounded like a music box translation of "away we go."

Finally, having unwound herself, Stella stopped, and I rushed in to wind her up again. Perhaps this was foolhardy because she might have gone into another cakewalk, but fortunately whatever had been out of whack was cured by her jaunt. After that one time, she was a perfect lady and has never again gone exploring. I suppose Stella was just making merry for Christmas. Or maybe she wanted to scout out her new territory before settling down.

But to return to our reconnoitering expedition among the innards of music boxes, there is another essential part of the mechanism in cylinder boxes. This is the wheel that controls the shifting from one tune to another. Since it, too, is pointed like a star, although it's much larger than the other one, I

give you just one guess as to what it's called. It sounds like the star system is as important to music boxes as it is to astrologers, astronomers, Broadway, and Hollywood, but this is not quite the case. There are also non-pointed wheels inside music boxes. And the star wheel for changing cylinder tunes, unlike the star wheel for turning discs, is stepped at the side so that the cylinder is pushed horizontally when it is changing from one tune to another. There are as many steps and points on this star wheel as there are tunes on the cylinder. (The same sort of stepped wheel controls the movements made by those cute musical dolls that perform all sorts of tricks.)

The usual arrangement for big music boxes is one tune per revolution of the cylinder, so as each tune is finished, there is a minute sidewise shift of the cylinder and the next set of pins goes into place against the teeth of the comb to play the new selection. The teeth have to be far enough apart to allow the pins for all the other selections to slip through without playing. Many small musical movements that play just two tunes have one tune on one half of the cylinder, and the other tune on the other half.

Although ten tunes is the largest number of melodies that any of the cylinders for our boxes play, cylinders have been made that play more tunes. In fact, I understand that in the 1860's and '70's

What Makes a Music Box Go

music box makers converted combs designed for six-tune cylinders to combs for twelve-tune cylinders by simply breaking off the points of the alternate teeth. A comb designed to play twelve tunes is fine, but I can just imagine how horrible one of those hacked-up combs would sound. I'm very glad I've never heard one.

Music box combs are made of steel and have exactly the same shape as the non-musical article for which they were named. Sometimes there is only one comb, and sometimes several are set end to end. Although the teeth that produce the high notes are shorter and thinner than those that produce the low ones, size is not always an absolutely exact guide to their pitch. Because of space limitations, the low note teeth cannot be lengthened enough and have to be leaded underneath in order to cut down the vibrations and make the tone as low as it should be.

In some music boxes, two and occasionally more teeth for the same note are set side by side on the comb and are played by alternate pins on the cylinder or projections on the discs. When two teeth are used like this, it produces double notes (that is, the same note repeated) which give the effect of a sustained tone. A music box cannot keep a note going as long as a violinist can with a bow or a singer with a powerful pair of lungs. Once played, a note de-

parts pretty quickly unless it is replayed. That is, notes in the upper and middle registers do. The low notes linger longer because bass notes naturally sustain themselves. Therefore, double notes usually occur in the middle register on the combs, because these are the notes that are unable to sustain themselves, and also because this is where the melody is. And it is the main notes of the scale—the *do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si, do*—and not the accidentals that get this double attention.

But in addition to providing the notes, combs have another function: playing the attachments. When a box has drums and bells, like our Butterfly, there are separate teeth that control their playing. These, too, are operated by the pins on the cylinder, and as these teeth are plucked, they work a little mechanism that has an arm attached to the bell striker or the drum beater.

Organ attachments work essentially the same way, although in this case the music box, naturally, has to have pipes and bellows. While the drum and bell attachments may or may not be used, depending on how the person operating the box feels about the matter, some organ attachments can't be switched on and off but are an integral part of the box.

Although I'm fond of the drums and bells and

What Makes a Music Box Go

don't mind the zither or harp attachment, which is a roll covered with paper or parchment that rests lightly on the comb, I'm afraid that that is about as far as I can go. The organ attachments are not for me, and, as far as I'm concerned, some of the old boxes have had so many tone-changing gadgets added that they're no longer music boxes.

In a way it's like making modern arrangements of Beethoven or Brahms. Schönberg, for instance, took Brahms' *Piano Quartet in G Minor* and arranged it for orchestra, but having put in xylophones, glockenspiel, drums, and what have you, he lost Brahms. I personally am for Brahms and for the music box—the music box pure and simple. Let it speak for itself without any gimmicks.

This reminds me of what Liszt did to Mozart. Liszt was a terrific showman and a fabulous technician; but when he took those beautiful excerpts from *Don Giovanni* and arranged them for a piano solo in his *Don Juan Fantasy*, you'd never know it was Mozart. Poor Mozart is almost entirely lost sight of, and although the *Fantasy* is a wonderful piece of music, I quite frankly can't stand it. There is just one place where Mozart manages to slip in: in the beautiful duet between Don Giovanni and Donna Anna, "Là ci darem la mano." Fortunately, it is seldom inflicted on my ears.

Another essential part of a music box is the damper. On cylinder type boxes, this is a tiny wire spring (or a piece of chicken feather for the high notes) which is underneath each tooth. The pins hit these dampers just before hitting the teeth and playing the note. (On disc types, the dampers are tiny wires set at the side of the teeth.) Dampers stop the left-over vibrations and eliminate the squeak that would otherwise result. Very high notes almost never have dampers, because their vibrations stop fairly quickly. I might add that only a very special part of the wing feather of a hen is used for these cylinder box dampers: the bristles on the upper part of the wider side. How many chickens have gone into the pot as a result of the demand for dampers, I refuse to estimate.

The dampers are one of the reasons that M. Pailard long ago advised, via a card that's still in the Billy box, "When not used never leave the cylinder in the middle of a tune." The continued pressure would harm the dampers. Also, music boxes need a running start to get going and space is provided for this before the first tune and between tunes, but obviously there's none in the middle of a piece. The same card cautions the owner, "Before changing cylinders a tune must be entirely finished."

Changing a cylinder is a bit complicated, but

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there's no problem with changing discs, which was the reason these boxes were so popular. There are even some boxes whose discs are interchangeable—certain sizes of discs for Reginas and Polyphons can be played by either box, and some Olympia and Criterion discs are also musical “sisters in the metal.”

Another interesting type of disc box is the automatic changer. Made only by the Polyphon and Regina people, these were pretty rare among music boxes, probably because they were quite expensive. Of course, they're even rarer today. There's a wonderful automatic Regina in the Musical Museum in Deansboro, New York, which has a beautiful tone.

Because of the projections on the discs, the automatic changers couldn't drop the discs one on top of the other the way a phonograph does. In these automatic music boxes the discs are played in a vertical position instead of in the flat horizontal one. When the discs are changed, the new one is lifted up into playing position and its predecessor slides down below into the case.

Unfortunately, I don't own any automatic disc changers, but just for fun one day, I wound up our Symphonion and let it keep running after it had finished playing a disc. Like any good machine it has a definite sense of rhythm, even when it's not playing anything. First I heard a little “zuzz-um,”

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then the mechanism seemed to be telling me "go on, go on, go on," just as though it were announcing that it was about time for me to select another disc. (I don't, however, recommend putting on or taking off a disc while the machine is going.) Once I left a record on a phonograph that was still going, and that final repetition at the end of the record seemed to say, "the war, the war, the war." I've heard other machines that give out a cheery "good morning, good morning," which is a nice contrast to that belligerent-sounding record. I think, though, that my favorite mechanical rhythm is the clackety-clack of a train.

It may seem odd, but there's a big difference between the sounds of American trains and English trains. I remember the last time I was in England. It had been years and years since I was on a train there, but when I boarded one again, it brought back all kinds of memories—for instance, the fact that British trains have a very odd time signature. Sometimes it's in seven beats, but other times it goes along and all of a sudden you hear the rhythm of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, "da-da-da DA; da-da-da DA." The interesting thing about this is that the rhythm doesn't stop as the train grinds into the station; you just hear a slower Beethoven's Fifth! Ludwig is running down.

What Makes a Music Box Go

Sometimes in a radio or television drama, somebody will say, "I'll meet you at Paddington Station." Since that's the station in London where I used to arrive from or leave for Wales, I instantly know the trains and their whistles. These are just high one-note whistles, a number of which have the same pitch.

American trains, on the other hand, whistle in chords, generally the diminished seventh. If you like this chord, American trains are the place for you. If you don't, it's "The Stuck Chord" instead of "The Lost Chord," because you're stuck with it until the end of your trip. The diminished seventh fascinates me for another reason: it's the only link between Beethoven and soap opera that I know of. Beethoven uses it all the time for musical pondering purposes, just before he goes into a new theme. This is a typical Beethoven characteristic—he's meditating, "What shall I do here?" But for organ accompaniments to soap opera this chord is sheer tragedy, underscoring lines like "He doesn't love her any more"; or "Who just shot Joe?"

Although United States train whistles, soap opera, and Beethoven have something in common, there's no link between American train rhythms and Beethoven, or any other classical composer. American trains have their own steady beat, but it's

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not a symphonic one. And the trains here don't run down, they just stop.

However, American highways, which luckily never stop, have their own rhythms, too. I think it must be because of the way they're made, in sections. I'm especially fond of one very rhythmic road that runs into St. Louis from the West. Generally, the beat of a highway is a "bommm bommm" followed by several bars of rests. When you're riding in a heavy car, this sounds like a bass drum hit full force, but I imagine that a smaller foreign car would produce a delicate "bom bom"—the kind of sound you'd get by striking timpani lightly.

There's quite a difference in sound between cylinder and disc music boxes. Even when I hear a recording of music box music and so don't know beforehand which type is being played, I can always tell what it is by listening. The softer tone quality of the cylinder types can be detected in even the most complicated and grand-sounding boxes. Although our Boston cylinder box has a marvelous, big, sonorous tone, the quality is softer than that of either the Regina or the Euphonia, which are both disc boxes.

But whether the box is cylinder or disc, I also like to listen to it while it's running down. This slow-motion "unwinding" shows me exactly what goes on with the tone, the tune, and the harmonies. And

What Makes a Music Box Go

another of my own private music box listening preferences is to hear a cylinder from beginning to end.

Many cylinder types do have selectors so that it's possible to hear, for instance, tune number 5 and then tunes number 1, 4, or 7, but I prefer to start with the first tune and go on from there. Although there is no apparent rhyme or reason for the order of music box tunes, it is the actual programing of the box, the way it was arranged by the box's maker, and that's the way I want to hear it.

Some people might think that I'm just being fussy, but music is a very orderly art, especially for a composer, and it's probably because, as a composer, I write in very definite forms, that I like to keep those forms in everyday life. I like the orderliness of beginning at the beginning of a music box cylinder, just as I always put records in their proper places when I'm through listening to them or return the music box (if it's a movable one) to the spot where it belongs. Except for that one time Stella went stepping, there are no runaway music boxes at Stornello.

A cuckoo named Schubert
Which hangs in our bedroom
Ticks away gaily in said room.
And when we retire
And turn our lights out
He adds to the cuckoo
His song called *The Trout*!



The Modern Music Box Yen

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN in a three-story house, all alone except for six music boxes, three clocks, and a piano? Well, Ella Lu, our housemaid, was. We had just moved to Stornello and had to leave immediately for a four-month concert tour. Ella Lu was left at home to receive the furniture as it arrived. Several years later we came

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upon a diary which she had kept during this time. This diary gave us an idea not only of what Ella Lu thought of us and our taste in decorating, but also of what she thought of music box collectors.

Dear Diary:

They left today. I thanked the Lord for the silence. But then that thing happened that scared me half dead. I was doing my work in the kitchen when I heard the music, and I knew there wasn't nobody but me left in the house. Mercy me, I flew out the door, shaking all over. And wouldn't you know it wasn't nobody but one of those unnatural clocks. I don't understand these people.

Dear Diary:

The carpets arrived today. Thank God. And I got a letter from my lady. She wants them bells put on the door. Mercy. A big box came, too. I hope it don't play music.

Dear Diary:

I was feeling very lonesome today. I turned the handle on one of them boxes. They told me not to. It plays real pretty music. I sat in the new easy chair too.

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Well, we had made a convert of Ella Lu without knowing it. And judging from the present-day scarcity of music boxes in antique stores, and the rising prices, it would seem that there have been a great many converts since Ella Lu.

It is the sentimental and emotional attachment, however, and not the price tag, that make present-day music box lovers so fond of their treasures. Just last spring when I was playing a concert in Toronto, I met a young newspaperwoman who was a fellow music box enthusiast. When she mentioned that her music box was out of order, I gave her the name of a repair man in New England to whom she could send the box. "Oh, I wouldn't think of sending it," she replied. "I'll put it in the car and take it down some weekend."

This is precisely my own sentiment about each of our music boxes, and we are certainly not alone in this. Music box enthusiasts everywhere feel the same way. About 150 of them (including the Templetons) are now banded together in the Musical Box Society International organized in 1949 by Lloyd G. Kelley and the late Adrian V. Bornand. The society held its first meeting in October of that year at the Berlin Heights, Ohio, home of Dr. Byron P. Merrick, who was elected the group's first president.

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In one way, modern music box devotees' feelings about their treasures are the exact opposite of those of their earlier counterparts. Once, the mechanical workings of music boxes were a marvel—as well they might be to generations who had never talked on the telephone, never ridden in an automobile, were yet to know the wonders of electricity, and had hardly dreamed of the airplane. But in today's push-button age, machines, incomprehensible to most of us, can translate the Bible into several languages. A music box seems like a delightfully simple affair, and the least mechanical-minded of us can understand its mechanism.

But the most charming property of music boxes is the entirely new sound it brings to our jaded and battered ears. Until recently, many people were not even aware that such sounds were still to be heard in an age of blaring horns and jangling noises. Today music boxes are a sort of new mechanical marvel—a gift from the days of the horse and carriage to the era of atoms and outer space.

Ironically, the phonograph, which was originally responsible for the eclipse of the music box, also deserves a large share of the credit for its return from the attic and the junk shop to a place of honor in the living-room, for many people have been introduced to the music box by records. And I'm happy to say,

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that my music boxes, via an RCA Victor recording, *Music Boxes and Chiming Clocks*, are bringing the sounds of yesteryear to homes of today.

The mode of life in America in the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries is as far removed from the modern mode as the waltz is from rock 'n' roll. Rural recreation, which was the variety that most of the population had to depend upon, was pretty much of the do-it-yourself at-home kind. There was certainly none of the professional entertainment that we are able to summon at the switch of a radio or television dial or the price of admission to a movie house.

Small-town or farm diversion was not only *at* home but *for* the home, too. The old-time husking bees, quilting bees, apple parings, and barn raisings were wonderful opportunities for relaxation as well as work, and these affairs frequently ended with music. Perhaps the country fiddler played, calling out the figures of a reel or a quadrille. But with the exception of the fiddler's family and near neighbors, there must have been very few individuals who were entertained by his music in the long days between community gatherings.

Of course, there was almost always at least one old-time reed organ in the community and probably several pianos, but even the most ardent music lover

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must have quailed at the idea of bumping along over rough country roads for several miles just to hear a performance on some distant neighbor's piano. He might have quailed at the home-grown performance, too, although there's the slight possibility that it may have been excellent. The music box presented none of these problems or uncertainties. It was both dependable and available.

Small towns which were lucky enough to be located on the banks of a good-sized river had a big entertainment advantage over inland towns, for they could look forward to the showboat. These waterborne productions provided a welcome break in the routine, offering everything from dramas and minstrel shows to circuses. The props, the performances, or the plays themselves may have left something to be desired; maybe the scenery collapsed unexpectedly, the actors forgot their lines, or the drama was somewhat below present-day standards, but the thrill of watching Eliza cross the ice or the satisfaction of hissing the villain certainly outweighed all other considerations. And it was a similar thrill, the thrill of entertainment, that the music box brought into the lives of these Americans of an earlier day.

The music box could also offer variety—hymns for the devout, popular songs and musical comedy numbers for the more frivolous, and operatic selec-

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tions for the lovers of classical music. The operatic numbers also undoubtedly appealed to those who had a secret hankering for the theater but whose religious beliefs wouldn't let them indulge it.

The anti-theatrical sentiment was still so strong in 1871 that when Barnum organized his circus that year, he was careful to advertise it as "Barnum's Great Moral Show"—and to hand out passes to preachers as well as to editors. The lyceum with its lecturers and thinly-disguised plays, and later the Chautauqua, also helped to fill in the entertainment gaps for these anti-theater folk. And Gilbert and Sullivan operettas were a terrific boon, because they, too, were given a clean bill of moral health.

Music boxes were able to cater to the scruples of the scrupulous as well as entertain the less particular. They brought a touch of far-off glamour into the home, especially into the American home whose treasured furnishings had been transported half-way across the continent in a covered wagon.

Music box music is the perfect expression of the exuberant spirit and the elaborate décor of the Victorian era. Those were the days when "gingerbread" appeared at least as often in wooden or metal form delectably ornamenting houses and public buildings as it did on the dinner table. Curlicues, scrolls, and whorls—all kinds of fanciful shapes that might

have stepped right out of the Arabian Nights—decorated the exterior of almost every kind of building, from workmen's cottages to millionaire's mansions, from the little red schoolhouse to the railroad station.

Music box music was the perfect sonic expression of the gingerbread trimming, the iron deer or stone lion on the lawn, and the elaborate furniture inside the house. Our Boston box, for example, plays its patriotic songs, ballads, and operatic arias with a flourish that must have gone beautifully with such Victoriana as the bent wood chair, the fluffy sideburn, the flowing beard, the bustle, the what-not shelf, and the cabbage rose carpeting.

And what embellishments our Regina uses for "Jesus, Lover of My Soul"! The beautiful old hymn is decked out with all kinds of little adornments that give it a typically Victorian sound. This box's version of Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" is equally elaborate, full of frills, trills, and runs that Mendelssohn never wrote. I can just imagine the bride marching out of the church and straight into a home furnished with plush or satin upholstered chairs and sofas protected by crochet-edged antimacassars, hand-carved tables topped with marble, and a hat rack decorated with Gothic arches. She may have even put a crocheted muzzle on the family

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pooch. Strangely enough, there were such things.

But even in the last part of the nineteenth century, life was not completely uncomplicated for people who owned ailing music boxes. There is a very interesting little pamphlet, *How to Repair Musical Boxes*, published then by Jacot & Son, New York City, and reprinted for moderns by Mr. Barny, a clock expert of the same metropolis, which gives an idea of some of the difficulties. The third edition, dated 1890, begins:

There is hardly a watchmaker at the present time who is not called upon, occasionally, to repair a musical box, and there are so many of these instruments in this country, that a competent workman, who is able to repair them properly, will find his skill well remunerated, many of them being quite valuable and belonging to persons who are able and willing to pay liberal prices for good work; yet there are comparatively very few workmen, even among the best watchmakers, who can make these repairs in a creditable manner.

This man knew what he was talking about, for although it was possible to buy a music box very cheaply—some disc boxes sold for as little as \$12—many of the fine ones of yesteryear were extremely

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expensive, even by today's standards. There were at least a few fabulous ones that cost as much as \$10,000. One of these was a Swiss box on a table with twelve cylinders, each of which played six tunes, and I know of a similar music box decorated with elaborate carving; this one, complete with six cylinders, had a price tag of \$4,400.

Every once in a while, one hears about the good old days of the nineteenth century when a person could eat a good meal for fifteen cents or a gourmet dinner for seventy-five cents to a dollar. But apparently even in those pre-inflationary times, people who had it could get rid of a fair amount of money.

No, fine music boxes weren't cheap and it was only because I started collecting them at a time when practically nobody thought of, had, or wanted music boxes that I managed to pick up some beautiful old ones for as little as fifty dollars. Those days have certainly departed; today these boxes are worth several times as much.

The greatest bargain in our collection was found in a paint store. The proprietor said we could buy the box at cost. Then he explained how he'd gotten it in the first place.

A man had brought it in several years before, saying that he needed five dollars very badly and hoping that the paint store owner would give him that

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much for the music box. The storekeeper was quite hesitant, since he couldn't see how that sort of item would fit into his stock, but the man with the music box persisted and promised to return some day and redeem his property.

After pleading for several more minutes, the music box owner ended with this clincher: "I really need that five dollars but I don't have any other possessions except my wife—and she isn't worth five dollars."

One of the nicest things about music boxes is that the listener never has to see how "hi" he can get the "fi." I'll never forget the couple who were raving about their terrific hi-fi set which, they declared, I just had to hear. It was absolutely fabulous; in fact it was so marvelous, they enthused, that whenever they played a record it made the whole mirrored wall in their living room tremble! This is fine if you're interested in reproducing the San Francisco earthquake on a small scale, but it certainly isn't music. Don't misunderstand me; I think hi-fi is wonderful. But I like to have it used for the purpose for which it was intended—reproducing music faithfully and beautifully. When the zealots get so busy experimenting, setting this speaker in this corner and that one in the opposite corner, rushing around arranging and rearranging fifty things all

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over the place, and testing, testing, testing, both enjoyment and music get lost in the shuffle. Music box owners left the experimenting to the factory, where it belonged.

Hi-fi and music boxes do have one thing in common, however, and that is the melodies they reproduce. Just as we listen to songs from *South Pacific* or *My Fair Lady* on our hi-fi, so did Grandpa and Grandma listen to tunes from such hit musicals as *The Belle of New York* or *Floradora*.

Hit operas also are in the repertoire of both music boxes and phonographs. I'm sure that it would have been no surprise to Rossini, for instance, to hear Rosina's aria, "Una voce poco fa," from *The Barber of Seville* played by our Boston box. He undoubtedly heard many music boxes perform his works. But he would certainly be amazed to discover the voices of Figaro and Rosina issuing from the speaker of a modern high-fidelity system. I can imagine his delight if the set played the music "straight," but I can just as easily imagine his horror if he happened to be subjected to a tester's version.

I suppose, though, that after the première performance of *The Barber*, Rossini would not have given good odds on its chances of ever being heard anywhere again. Although *The Barber* may have been one of the most popular fellows in Seville, he

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was almost hissed out of Rome by the first night audience at the Teatro Argentina in 1816. The Romans felt that the young composer was being extremely presumptuous in presenting an opera on the same theme that Paisiello had used for his *Barber*, which had been a favorite for a quarter of a century, and they fully intended to make the upstart suffer.

The tenor who sang the role of Count Almaviva that first night was certainly a great asset to the intentions of the *Romani* to embarrass Rossini. The tenor sang, as the Count's serenade, a horrible little number that he himself had composed in his spare time, and to make matters worse, he also tuned his guitar on stage. This was all the audience needed to go into gales of laughter. Things were better the second night, though: Rossini's own serenade "Ecco ridente in cielo" replaced the tenor's tune and the audience was at least quiet.

Today the Teatro Argentina is Rome's most important concert hall, and the home of the Santa Cecilia orchestra. The first performance of *Il Barbiere* is commemorated by a plaque in the side lobby. All partisanship long past, both Rossini and Paisiello now have their names on Roman streets—in fact, the two streets meet.

There is certainly plenty of less important music on music boxes, just as there are many less impor-

tant boxes. Early makers devoted a good deal of effort to elaborately decorated but more or less utilitarian articles such as musical snuffboxes, rings, cane handles, and decanters. Modern makers have come up with key rings, hair brushes, clothes brushes, umbrella handles, compacts, powder boxes, pourers, cake stands, and almost everything else you can think of, including toilet tissue rolls. A young man of today considers it just as amusing to light his girl friend's cigarette to the tune of "Two Cigarettes in the Dark" as his great-grandfather did to remove a pinch of snuff from a jeweled snuffbox that played Beethoven's *Minuet in G*. And a modern miss enjoys powdering her nose to the music of "Tea for Two" just as much as the young lady's great-grandmother enjoyed powdering hers to a few strains of a Mozart divertimento.

I'm sure that our antique sewing box and dressing case were cherished just as much for their charm and usefulness as for their music. Any dainty nineteenth century lady would have been delighted to open the brass-inlaid black wooden case of the sewing box with its blue velvet, and ruffled white satin interior, examining its gold accessories to the tune of its polka and waltz. Although its contents—gold scissors, bodkin, gold thimble, spools, crochet needles, and gold needle case—are quite beyond my

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masculine comprehension, I am sure she must have been thrilled with them. And there is a mirror in the lid, so the owner would look her best as she stitched her finest seam.

The dressing case, with its red velvet exterior and tufted pink satin interior, is even fancier. It, too, is mirrored, and it contains such absolutely indispensable feminine grooming aids as three crystal perfume bottles, an ivory nail cleaner, and an ivory glove stretcher. The music it plays is "A Nice Old Maid," an old English music hall tune, whose words, in part, go:

Wouldn't you like to go,
Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho;
And ask my dear Papa,
Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha——

Although it's a cute tune, I must quarrel with its selection for this dressing case, since I fail to understand how a lady with such elaborate glamourizers could possibly remain single.

Although I love to listen to these boxes, I'm equally fond of, and personally find more useful, some of our other gadgets that produce a musical interlude: the bottle pourer that plays "How Dry I Am," the cake stands that give forth with "Happy Birthday" or "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here," or

the Scotch bagpiping decanter that plays selections from "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" and "Auld Lang Syne." (I say selections with good reason because this Scotsman performs only about half of the latter and a mere quarter of the former.)

I wonder, since musical dressing cases and sewing boxes once so charmed the feminine half of the population, why some manufacturer of washing machines or dish washers doesn't investigate the possibilities of fitting a musical movement into his product. And I offer for the consideration of washing machine manufacturers the English equivalent of the American "Shave and a haircut, two bits": "Does your mother take in washing?"——"How the dickens do I know?"

But I do hope that if this sort of thing is pursued, manufacturers will go in for a little more variety than the pourer people do. I don't know what unwritten law decrees that every alcohol dispenser must play "How Dry I Am," but a modification of this statute seems to be in effect in clock circles, since almost every musical alarm will awaken you with "Oh! How I Hate to Get up in the Morning."

There are a few exceptions, though, and I am happy to own three alarm clocks that *don't* play Irving Berlin's famed lament of 1918. One presents the waltz from *The Merry Widow* and "I Want to

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Be Happy" from *No, No, Nanette*. The second wakens the reluctant slumberer to the tune of "Lorelei," and the third plays the "Barcarole" from *The Tales of Hoffmann*. Sometimes, though, musical alarm clocks are completely confusing. Once I heard a German clock that played "Santa Lucia," and I remember listening to a hurdy-gurdy cart made in Barcelona that played the well-known Spanish song, "Down by the Old Mill Stream." What I'm still searching for is a clock that plays *Danse Macabre*.

One of our maids was convinced that a few of our older boxes were inhabited by spirits of their former owners. She used to insist that, on certain nights when all other sounds, except the music of the clocks, were stilled, a "little white-capped lady" slipped out of one of the boxes' dim interior and walked stealthily throughout the house. Somehow this notion has always appealed to me. What it really needs to make it complete, however, is a clock that plays *Danse Macabre*. But, even without it, when, during the night, I hear faint strains of music from other rooms, I let my imagination wander. It's reassuring to think that some sentimental ghosts may be lingering at Stornello.

To keep a clock ticking
It's got to be level
Which leads to the story
Of Robert the Devil.

The musical timepiece
Which plays his gay aria
Is old and decrepit
We couldn't be sorrier!!



The House of Chiming Clocks

THE BOSTON BOX may lord it over the rest of the music boxes at Stornello, but Grandpa is the king of the chiming clocks. And he's eminently well fitted for the job: his regal height (7 feet 9 inches), his sonorous voice, and his musical versatility (he plays both Westminster and Whit-

tington chimes) combine to make him the perfect monarch. And he's also in the key of E major.

Grandpa began his reign on Christmas Eve, 1944, but the circumstances surrounding his accession were more like the search for the Dalai Lama than like the simple hereditary process by which monarchs usually acquire their positions. Maybe finding Grandpa wasn't quite as difficult as discovering a new Dalai Lama, but it did take Julie several years of intensive searching in country auctions, auction galleries, clock shops, and every other place where this kind of timepiece might turn up.

Although she seemed to be getting nowhere, she kept at it, because we knew that at least two E major grandfather clocks existed. One of them belongs to some friends, and the other is in the Sherman Hotel in Chicago. So she went bravely on, even though her difficulties were compounded by the fact that she has relative rather than perfect pitch. Whenever she found a likely prospect, she would sing the note of its chimes until she could get to a piano to check it. Finally, I gave her a pitch pipe to take along on her clock excursions, which considerably simplified the question of ruling out candidates. But it didn't help her find one until the day she walked into an auction gallery down in New York's Greenwich Village.

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There, towering over a group of antiques that were to be sold, stood Grandpa. And what a magnificent Grandpa, complete with brass filagree-decorated face and two hand-carved shield-bearing lions, gargoyles, and cornucopias. He was made in Germany, probably in the 1890's, and is a very stately timepiece indeed.

More important, he was in that elusive key, E major. This was it! On auction day Julie was there, determined to take Grandpa home with her, and after some very spirited bidding she got him.

Of course she was just dying to tell me about the whole thing—and since she had found him well before Christmas, I don't know how she managed to keep her secret—but she and Grandpa had made a pact of silence and they kept it. Grandpa was probably even more eager than she to reveal his presence, since he had spent many weeks in temporary exile in an unused corner of the basement waiting for the proper moment to take over his kingdom.

Eventually the great day, Christmas Eve, arrived. Julie had arranged everything so that the whole operation should have gone off perfectly smoothly. Our Gainsborough friend, the moving man, was to hoist Grandpa from his refuge, and a jeweler was to be on hand to put Grandpa's chimes together again.

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After fixing everything up for Grandpa, her next problem was to get me out of the way during the crucial moving and setting-up period. She suggested that we visit some friends who had a new baby. I would have been all for it at any other time, but Christmas Eve struck me as an exceptionally inappropriate time to go calling. However, she was so persuasive about it that I finally agreed, and we went over to pay our respects to the new arrival. And we paid them at great length.

We stayed and stayed and stayed. Finally a man who was working for us came over and, although I didn't know it at the time, whispered to Julie that everything was in a complete mess at home and nobody knew what to do about it. Hoping that her presence might have at least a calming influence on the situation, she announced that she'd just dash home and see about dinner. "Otherwise," she explained, "we won't eat tonight," and added gaily, "But Alec, there's no reason for you to rush off. I'll be back in a few minutes to finish our visit."

So there I sat, chatting away, while Julie went home to consult with the clock man. He stood, completely lost, in the midst of Grandpa's chimes, which were strewn all over the floor. About the only thing he was sure of at that point was that it would take at least another twelve hours to get Grandpa in order,

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and he declared regretfully that he couldn't even spare another hour because his son was just about due to get home on leave from the army for Christmas. That was that. Julie sadly cleared away the chimes, came back to pick me up, and we went home to a greatly delayed dinner.

It was while we were eating that the whole story came out. I suddenly realized that the hall clock—a much smaller timepiece that I called Ed—hadn't been wound. But when I went to wind Ed, I was confronted by Grandpa. I was completely surprised. At that point Grandpa was the very last thing in the world that I expected to find.

Julie confirmed my hopes about E major but dashed all others by saying sadly, "It's in the right key, but it doesn't *zack*." However, I certainly wasn't going to be deterred by a little thing like that when I finally had my dream clock in my possession. I asked Julie to bring out the chimes, listened to them, made up a master plan for placing them in the clock, and a friend who was dining with us helped to hang them in their proper spots.

So Grandpa was all set in record time and I was so delighted that I didn't sleep all night listening to him chime every fifteen minutes. Once put together, Grandpa has remained in fine shape ever since, with the exception of a couple of very minor repairs. As

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befits the king, he's been the stalwart of our collection.

Since Grandpa does treat us to two types of chimes, I have him set to play the Whittington ones (which sound like church bells) on Sunday, and he booms forth the Westminster (or Big Ben) chimes during the week. Every time I hear him going to town on those Westminster chimes, I think of the nonsense words we used to put to them at home:

“Does your back ache?”

“Oh, yes, it does.”

“Shall I scratch it?”

“Oh, no thank you.”

In addition to his versatility as a performer, Grandpa has a very interesting pre-strike “stand-by signal.” Each clock has its own special noise for this announcement of what's about to happen. It reminds me of the last-minute signals given by radio or TV directors just before a show goes on the air. Grandpa's tip-off to the hourly recital is heard five minutes in advance of his concert, and sounds like the thud of a closing door.

Although obviously Grandpa can't go along with me on tour, I do let my audiences listen to him via one of my compositions—an encore number titled “Portrait of My Grandfather Clock.”

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In my travels, I've heard a couple of other grandfather clocks which I wish could join our clock collection, but since I'm sure that their owners will never part with them, I'm afraid that Grandpa will be forever deprived of their companionship. One of them, a Dutch clock, plays "My Grandfather's Clock" on its chimes—not automatically but when wound. Otherwise it's a standard working clock. The other, which belongs to Arthur Ziern of Kirkwood, Missouri, is a fabulous grandfather that plays both Christmas carols and Easter hymns.

Whenever I hear a wonderful chiming clock like Grandpa I'm reminded of English church bells, since church bells are such an important part of the sound of the British Isles. And I can't help recalling an incident that occurred when I was a small boy visiting some friends who lived right across the street from a church in Ordley, Staffordshire, England. One Sunday morning as we listened to the chimes, we noticed that there were only five bells, instead of the expected six. Everybody was wondering what had happened to the missing bell, when someone looked out the window and cried, "Oh, there's C sharp running across the street. He's late."

Nor will I ever forget the time in Adelaide, Australia, when I had been taken to hear a particularly fine peal of bells. After listening to their concert, I

was introduced to the bell ringers, but instead of meeting them by name, I was greeted by F sharp, G, A, and so on.

There's no bell tower flavor in the sound of the chimes sung out by Marion, the clock that shares with Grandpa the honor of telling the correct time. Marion's voice is feminine and gentle as she tolls the sweet tones of the Sonora chimes. She's Grandpa's exact opposite in looks, too, being just as petite as he is tall and as plain as her partner is ornate.

Marion was named for our friend, Mrs. Elmer Ray Jones, the former Marion Telva, who sang at the Metropolitan Opera in the Rosa Ponselle days, and made history with Ponselle in Bellini's *Norma*. It was Marion who gave me the little E major Christmas tree that I'm so fond of, as well as a repeater coach clock which I called "Little Marion."

(Repeaters are clocks or watches that strike first the hour, then the nearest half or quarter hour, when the winding stem is pushed. Some of them, the minute repeaters, even go on to strike the time past these check points. And coach clocks were just that—timepieces put in coaches in the old days to let the traveler know the hour.)

I was so fond of Little Marion that I always took her on tour with me and I must say that she gave a fine performance one cold, blustery winter morning

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during World War II. I was descending from the train in a town where I was to give a concert and when, bundled in overcoat, muffler, and fur-lined gloves and clutching Little Marion in my hand, I stepped to the platform, the clock began to ring. Four men from the local concert committee were there to meet us and one of them greeted me with, "Are you an air raid warden, Mr. Templeton?"

Although none of the other coach clocks has been taken on tour with me, one of them, which is in the shape of a pagoda and is equipped with very Oriental-looking numerals, has every appearance of having been designed for an overland trip to China.

While Marion is Grandpa's time-telling partner, he does have a mate who is closer to him in size and who is a sort of second-in-command, acting as his agent for the upstairs. This clock is Grandma, whose slim, undecorated mahogany case gives her the mien of a serene Quaker lady.

Her voice isn't quite as serene as her appearance, though, because when she chimes, you can hear her all over the house. In fact, she reminds me of a town hall clock. When we first got Grandma she was silent, but after her vocal "chords" were restored, she developed some kind of obscure neurosis, because her striking mechanism went absolutely crazy. She began announcing times like "fourteen o'clock" and

one day she hit a new high with "twenty-six o'clock."

But whatever her disease, she managed to recover all by herself and now chimes out the hours correctly. One interesting thing about her chime is that she sounds three-note chords instead of single notes.

Like other large clocks, Grandma has a slow, deliberate tick. Since clocks do tick in different tempos, I love to hear a lot of them going at the same time. You get all kinds of strange, primitive rhythms—meeting and parting, meeting and parting. The effects produced would make a great piece for percussion.

I hope, though, that anyone who writes the piece won't fall into the same trap that one composer who wrote a piece for a clock did. I heard this work when I was giving a concert in a town in Pennsylvania. One of the churches happened to be very near our hotel and the first thing that caught my ears was the church clock which played what sounded almost exactly like the theme from Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. And it was repeated every fifteen minutes! I'm very fond of the *Rhapsody*, but I don't want to hear it quite that frequently, and I was terribly curious to know how it had suddenly acquired religious

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connotations. After making a few discreet inquiries, I discovered that one of the clergymen had written the melody himself, thinking that he had composed an original tune!

That clergyman wasn't very original in his composing, but many of the people who designed our clocks showed a great deal of originality in turning out their designs. One excellent example among several very elaborate clocks in our collection is the ormolu-trimmed English rosewood clock, which experts tell us should be in a museum. Its décor includes turrets, caryatids, a woman's face, a flower design, cornucopias, and winged dragon legs.

Its four-note chime, which sounds every fifteen minutes, must originally have been as elaborate as the clock's design but it hasn't held up quite as well as the case. Every once in a while the chime gives a short, low "whoop" sound. But then it manages to right itself and play a pretty fair semblance of what must have been its original sound.

I have found that practically everybody is entranced by the sounds of chimes and bells. Once, just before a concert in Bartow, we rushed over to Lake Wales to hear the carillon of the Singing Tower. That night at the concert, I improvised an impression of the Singing Tower's bells. After the

program, our chauffeur came bursting backstage, absolutely goggle-eyed, asking, "Do you have those bells in your pocket, Mr. Templeton?"

While I'm afraid that those bells would be a little large even for Man Mountain Dean to carry around with him, I do carry some small bells in my pocket. Those are the ones inside my repeater pocket watches. My favorite pocket bells are hidden away in the gold watch I call the San Marco. Its face is decorated with two miniature Chinese figures which hold hammers in their hands and when the watch chimes, they strike a tiny gong. It is also embellished with leaves and birds in gold and blue enamel.

I'm sure that the enormous clock in Venice's Piazza San Marco would laugh down from its tower if it knew a mere watch was its namesake, and the real San Marco's Moorish bell ringers would undoubtedly resent the whole idea. But my San Marco has one improvement over the original—it is a minute repeater. There's almost as much contrast in sound between the two as there is in size, because my watch's tone is exactly the same as the bell used by the ticket taker on English trams—the fellow who says "Tickets, please" and rings the bell after you've handed over your little slip.

My other prize watches are one with a chased gold face and a chime that sounds exactly like the

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bell of a San Francisco cable car, and an early eighteenth century French lady's watch (which of course I don't carry) which has a nice chime and is beautifully decorated with marcasite and an enamel miniature of a cavalier with his lady. These two and the San Marco all came from a fabulous private watch collection that had been bought by a New Orleans antique shop.

The shop is one of Julie's regular check points in New Orleans since she has already found several other things there, and when she stopped by during one of our visits to the city, the proprietors told her about the watch collection.

But before showing it to her, they went through a series of precautions elaborate enough to protect Fort Knox. The shop occupies two houses joined by a courtyard. First, they hurried all customers out of both places, and also got rid of any courtyard visitors. Then they bolted all the doors, hung up "Out to Lunch" signs, closed all the windows and shutters and drew velvet curtains over them. Not until all that was accomplished could the safe be unlocked and the watches displayed.

Considerably larger than these watches but equally ornate is our German travel clock, also a repeater. This gold-plated metal clock, which has a winged god at the top of its case, is equipped with

a loop so that a gentleman on horseback could attach it to his belt. It is also outfitted with a leather case to help it withstand the rigors of the trip. The clock has probably been on many an outing, too, since it was made in about 1730, according to John W. Bennett, our clock and music box expert from Old Greenwich. (Incidentally, he was *not* the man who was so baffled by Grandpa's chimes.) The sound produced by this clock is in proportion to its size, and is therefore not very big.

Naturally, the clocks that I heard at Oxford had a much, much bigger sound. But when I visited the beautiful old university town, I was more impressed by the notes of their chimes than by their volume. Instead of playing a four-note chime like the Westminster, these clocks all struck five notes. I was especially intrigued by them, because they were the same sort of unrelated tones that I get when I ask my audiences to call out any five notes for me to use in improvising. What an idea for improvisation—I could improvise for a week on the notes from those Oxford chimes!

Although I'm afraid that an improvising clock is quite out of the question, I almost expected the one in Rheims Cathedral to do something of the sort. It's one of the most unusual clocks that I've ever heard and while I listened to it only once, from in-

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side the cathedral, I loved it, because when it plays, you get a great big production. First it chimes, next it strikes the hour, then the carillon plays for about ten minutes. And that clock does all sorts of different things with its bells, too. One low bell rings, then another, and then various groups of bells sound, so you never really know what to expect next.

And in Holland the carillon clocks—which are practically the musical signature of the country—are absolutely marvelous. All the town clocks there have carillons which play little Dutch tunes on the hour. In the big cities like Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague, each carillon has its own special composition, a sort of theme song for the clock.

England, too, has its carillons—and makes many for other countries—but they're not nearly as popular as the peal of bells. Usually when bells are rung for these peals, they are set with the mouth of the bell turned up. This produces a distinctive sound, a sort of jumpy rhythm, which is a joy to the ears. Chiming has a softer sound: the bell is rung fairly gently while in the usual mouth-downward position.

There are a number of good-sized chiming clocks in this country, and I'll never forget one of them—the bank clock in Joplin, Missouri. This clock's chime happened to have a note missing and at my concert there, when I played my impression of in-

teresting clocks and bells I've heard in my travels, I added the local clock, complete with pause where the missing note should have been. The audience roared, and after I got home, I received a letter from the bank's president, assuring me that the lost chime would be replaced and would be waiting when I returned to Joplin.

None of the Stornello clocks is minus a bell, but many of them do have their own little oddities. One which certainly has them is the mixed-up Welsh kitchen clock that doesn't play a Welsh air at all, but "Estudiantina"—which has been "immortalized" by the singing commercial "My beer is Rheingold, the dry beer." This clock is slightly confused in a few other ways, too. For one thing, it plays its tune so that the melody is slightly ahead of the accompaniment—in a sort of Paderewski-in-reverse fashion. (He had the habit of playing the left hand or accompaniment slightly before the right.) For another thing, we have to keep the clock hanging so that it's a little off-center; otherwise it stops. To complete its complications it has a thoroughly non-Welsh design, for it looks like a classic Greek temple.

The Ugvie, which I mentioned earlier, has no musical peculiarities, but it does have some interesting "stand-by" effects. About five minutes before

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the hour it makes a noise like somebody shutting a little drawer; then, approximately a half a minute before going into action, it gives two small warning sounds as though gathering its energies together for the big effort. And if your ears are as much on the alert as the clock's mechanism, you can hear a very deep tick that sounds like someone tiptoeing into a room, before it strikes the half and quarter hours.

One of the more interesting clock sound effects is the ticking of our Seth Thomas, which I call the B flat strike. Its décor is as American as roasting ears, including a painted eagle and a typical tree-shaded white New England farmhouse. But that farmhouse may not have been quite as serene as it seems, for this clock has an ominous and ghostly tick.

One of our clocks is called Lucy because it came from the home of Mrs. Reginald (Lucy) Newton. In the midst of a small party we were attending there one evening, I became aware of the ticking of a clock. I went to the piano, and improvised a song to go with the ticking; the clock provided the rhythm around which I improvised.

Hark, hark the clock:

Listen to its stately tick.

Hark, hark the clock:

Slowly it ticks, not quick.

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Tramping, marching feet,
Or your next-door neighbor's knock,
Will never drown the beat
Of the stately tick of the clock.

A few months later I wanted to use this piece with the clock's ticking on the air, and I phoned to ask if I could borrow it. Lucy was delighted to lend it to me. In fact, she refused to take it back. And the Lucy clock has been heard at Stornello ever since.

Attention Smiths and Browns and Morgans:
Try ham and eggs
With Hammond Organs!

Do you like Claude Debussy?
Then listen *mère* and *père*
A glass of orange juic-y
Goes so well with *La Mer*.
I tried *La Mer* with peppermint
And how my face did fall
For peppermint's Tchaikovsky,
Not Debussy at all!!

A Fugue and a fig
O Boy, what a lark!
I love a kadota
While listening to Bach!



Christmas at Stornello

IT IS NEVER any trouble for Santa Claus to find his way to Stornello. All he needs to do is beam his reindeer radar to the most constant "Silent Night" signal in Connecticut and head in.

Fortunately, "Silent Night" is one of my favorite carols, because it is played by seven of the sixteen members of our Christmas music box collection.

This carol, which means Christmas to people almost everywhere, was written on Christmas Eve 140 years ago. Like so many things prized by mankind, it was the result of an accident. Just before the holiday, Father Joseph Mohr, the parish priest in the little Austrian town of Oberndorf, discovered that several notes on the church organ were out of order. When he learned that the organ couldn't be repaired in time to play the traditional carols at the Midnight Mass, he went to his friend Franz Gruber, the organist in the neighboring village of Arnsdorf. Together, in a few hours, they composed the words and music of a new carol that used only those notes that were in working condition on the Oberndorf organ. At Mass that night the words and music of "Silent Night" were sung for the first time.

One of our "Silent Night" music boxes is a snow-covered church that could almost be a replica of the village chapel where the carol was first heard.

The same carol is also played by a perfectly made miniature wooden crèche, brought to me by my manager Kurt Weinhold from Oberammergau, the little German village famed for its Passion Play. And although I have never been there, I like to

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imagine it on a crisp Christmas Eve with the snow crunching underfoot and the melody of the carol heard in the distance.

Some summer I hope to be there for a performance of the Passion Play, which has been given every ten years since 1634 (except for three war-time interruptions) by the citizens as the result of a vow made to present it if the plague would leave the town. The play, which has eighteen acts, includes orchestral and choral music, and takes a whole day to perform. It is such an important part of the town that more than seven hundred local people take part in it.

The same kind of care that goes into the Passion Play is evident in this Oberammergau music box of dark and light natural woods. It is so detailed that the miniature angel sitting on top of the stable is decorated with a tiny wooden ribbon that flows across the front of his robe.

Another "Silent Nighter," the manger with the Christ Child, which I mentioned earlier for its performance of the carol *à la* Strauss has a second unusual musical characteristic. It is the only music box "Silent Night" I have heard that plays the original ending as Gruber wrote it. We always have a good laugh when we unpack this box at Christmas time, because of a man who once worked for us. He was

helping to put away the holiday decorations after Christmas, and when he came to the manger, he asked, "What do you want me to do with the kid in the crib?" We've never quite gotten over it.

One of last year's Christmas gift boxes pays a delightfully naive tribute to the Christ child. This delicately carved wooden angel plays "Happy Birthday." I love the way it slows down at the end, just as a group of people would do if they were singing the song, to make the last "happy birthday" a real grand finale.

One of the most thrilling musical Christmas gifts I ever received was a tape recording of the Llandaff Cathedral bells, the first bells I ever heard. A friend in Cardiff, Mrs. Mary Alcock, who knew me as a child, spent a week-end with us at Stornello last year, and we were reminiscing about the Llandaff bells. When she returned to Cardiff she arranged to have a tape made of them, and sent it to me.

The recording also includes part of the musical service sung by the boys' choir, greetings from friends, and a few words from the Dean of the Cathedral. He tells something of the history of the bells, one of which, the tenor bell (in bell terminology, the low and not the high bell), dates from the early part of the seventeenth century. Originally there were only eight bells, but after World War I

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two more were added in celebration of the Allied victory. All together the bells weigh about five tons. They suffered considerably during the blitz in the Second World War, as a result of which they had to be recast and rehung. The recording begins with a peal by all ten bells, and then the original eight carry on, playing hymns.

We particularly enjoy having the Llandaff hymns at Stornello, since few of our Christmas music boxes play anything but carols. Among our many versions of "Silent Night" is the slow and stately performance given by the Polyphon. The "Silent Night" disc for this coin-operated box is the most dignified arrangement of the carol we have, and it is played at a tempo leisurely enough for singing. Fortunately, I have figured out a way to operate the Polyphon without a coin, because we play it so often at Christmas that the coin box would soon be crammed, and only the repair man knows how to empty it. The rest of the year this box features a most secular tune, "My Irish Molly-O."

While I never get tired of hearing some of the carols on the large boxes, to provide variety and a bit of comic relief, we deck the piano with an assortment of small novelty boxes. Although most were stocking stuffers from Julie, there is one that I chose myself in Lugano, Switzerland.

We had gone into a fascinating little shop which specialized in cuckoo clocks. Since this was to be my first cuckoo clock, I wanted something very special but I had no preconceived notion of just what it would be.

The walls of the shop were literally covered with clocks of all sizes and shapes. The little shopkeeper and Julie got along fine, because in no time at all she had made a choice. As far as I was concerned, however, I had only just begun to shop. Paying no attention to Julie at all, I insisted on hearing almost every clock in the shop. Finally I made my choice.

"This one," I said succinctly.

"Do we have to have *that* one?" Julie asked in great disappointment. "I think it is the one unattractive clock in the shop."

"I've got to have this one, Julie," I said. "It's the only clock that cuckoos in the key a cuckoo cuckoos in."

On the way out, Julie spied a crudely carved wooden angel and commented on what a dear little thing it was. I thought I would make up for the cuckoo clock and buy it for her. The shopkeeper said, "You like that? I have more."

"More?" I asked. I knew immediately that we were in trouble.

"These are music boxes," the shopkeeper went

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on. "They are carved by the neighboring farmers, and a local factory puts in the mechanism."

In no time flat a dozen little angels were before us, and I had to listen to each one. Again I faced a momentous decision. Which angel to take home? All of them sounded celestial, but none of their tunes were recognizable. One of them was particularly garbled and off pitch.

"This," I said.

"Oh, no!" said Julie, in mock horror. "Please don't have that one. It has the face of an ugly old man."

"I can't help that," I said. "It's just deliciously off-key."

So we brought it home, and after weeks of guesswork I finally succeeded in identifying a tune called "Natale Bianca"—better known to us as "White Christmas."

Christmas music in the Templeton household, however, has by no means been limited to that produced by music boxes. Our first year at Stornello, Julie surprised me by inviting a group of carolers from the local high school. On Christmas Eve, fifteen crimson-robed children carrying lighted candles silently appeared under the largest pine tree on our front lawn. After the first joyous strains of "Deck

the Halls'' they began to file into our living-room, and the evening ended with a vanilla eggnog party.

By the second year a tradition had been established; only this time there were twenty-five youngsters, and we had to stretch the eggnog. The following year thirty showed up, and the numbers kept increasing until one year we counted sixty-five—a lot of carolers and a lot of vanilla eggnog.

That was the year of the bagpipes. I received two sets, one directly from Scotland, and the other by way of Canada. These were the first bagpipes I ever tried to play.

The instruction book, which we read aloud to the amusement of our Christmas Eve guests, said: "Keep the wind flowing freely." Huffing and puffing, I succeeded in producing only some ghastly sounds that no one in his right mind could ever describe as music. Every now and then Julie would say, with more irony, I suspect, than a sincere attempt at encouragement, "Don't you just love those old Scotch songs?" But no force on earth would have discouraged me at that point. I was determined to play the bagpipes. I sat up all night, and so did our guests.

By Christmas night I was able to produce recognizable music and decided to surprise some friends with a bagpipe serenade. It was about nine o'clock,

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the snow was falling, and there was a cathedral-like quiet over everything when we stopped our car on the country road outside their home. I shattered the silence by *skirling* "Noël, Noël" with the spirit of a pipe major. I've never achieved a more dramatic effect with music, nor have I ever had such a startled audience.

Since then I have not only been made a life member of the Manitoba Pipers Association, but I have also been honored by being made pipe major of the Seaforth Highlanders in Vancouver and the Royal Canadian Air Force. And *that* was an occasion I shall never forget.

The Royal Canadian tartan is strictly government issue, and since I had not yet received mine, I was ushered into a room full of kilts and told to wear the one that fit best. Most pipers are quite large, however, and so were these kilts, somewhat too large for me. I put on the smallest one I could find, and held it together tightly with a large safety pin. Then I took my place in the formation.

Soon I was piped on stage, where I joined the Air Force Pipers in a traditional program. Suddenly the formation was broken, and I found myself quite closely surrounded by the other pipers.

"Mon," said a voice in my ear, "you're losing your troosers!"

Alec Templeton's Music Boxes

The next morning the *Toronto Star* ran the following headline:

TEMPLETON MADE AIR FORCE PIPE MAJOR
WITH KILTS AT HALF MAST

Another musical feature of Christmas at Stornello is our recording of Italian Christmas music, which includes the plaintive piping of the *zampogna*, or Italian bagpipe. At this time in Rome, the beautiful Piazza Navona in the heart of the city, where the Christmas fair is held every year, is the place where the bagpipe truly expresses the Christmas celebration. Here in front of the crèche with its life-size figures of Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus are two bagpipers playing the ancient folk melodies.

At Christmas the fair, with its booths of carnival games, *espresso* stands, Christmas ornament stalls, and mobs of people, gives the Piazza an atmosphere found nowhere else. On the night before Epiphany, January 6, the traditional time for gift-giving in Italy, the Piazza Navona is a madhouse of crowded humanity—teen-agers blowing on whistles, youngsters dancing for coins, and parents buying last-minute gifts. Over it all can be heard the wail of the bagpipes.

Epiphany, the day on which the three kings brought gifts to the Christ Child, was actually an

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earlier celebration than Christmas. In the first several centuries after Christ there were practically no special Nativity services, since these were included in Epiphany. It was about 320 A.D. that the Roman church set December 25 as the day for celebrating Christ's birth.

Today in Italy it isn't the three kings who bring the gifts but the witch, Befana, who gives presents to good children, but leaves only a lump of coal for bad bambini. And in Italy, as in the United States, not only the children benefit from the Befana. Among the adults to whom she's exceedingly generous are Rome's traffic policemen—those skilled manipulators of the frantic flow of vehicles of all sizes and types that choke the streets of the Eternal City—to whom the Befana, aided by the Rome Auto Club and various commercial enterprises, "dedicates" everything from Vespas to *vino*.

When I serve as the Befana's counterpart at Stornello, I like to give musical presents, and Julie is the chief recipient. Every year I present her with a composition or two.

I didn't get the idea for the Christmas compositions from Wagner's gift of the "Siegfried Idyll" to Cosima two Christmases after their son Siegfried was born (Wagner presented his composition by having a small orchestra play it while he conducted).

Nor did I get it from Schumann's gifts to his wife Clara or Bach's to Anna Magdalena. I just thought it would be an appropriate addition to Christmas, and Christmas music, at Stornello.

Last year's Christmas offering was a carol—a musical setting for G. K. Chesterton's poem, "A Christmas Carol," which begins, "The Christ Child lay on Mary's breast." There was also a novelty song, but the Templeton presentation had no Wagnerian flourishes. I just sat down at the piano and played and sang them as the presents were being unwrapped. Sometimes I make a recording of the gift composition, but last year's was a live performance.

The compositions themselves may vary from longhair to pop songs of the very close-cropped coiffure type. One year I wrote a piano piece called *Christmas at Stornello* which included such sections as "Trimming the Tree," "Santa Claus is Here," "Christmas Bells on Sunday Morning," and "A Christmas Party." An organ solo called *Suite Noël*, which I wrote for another Christmas gift, has since been heard in churches all over the country and has been played many times by E. Power Biggs.

One musical gift that I'm still hoping to receive some day is an Italian *flauto antico*, which is like the pipes of Pan. I heard this instrument for the

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first and only time in Venice, during a folk music festival. A group of about twenty-five musicians gave a whole concert on a variety of them, ranging from tiny instruments to enormous ones. Unfortunately, I didn't think to ask the performers where I could get one.

We left Venice the next day, and the more I thought about the sound, the more fascinated I became. I began asking about *flauti antichi* in music stores. Having questioned every music store proprietor on the way from Venice to Florence, we wandered into the Lenci doll store there and began talking to the manager about them. Suddenly he produced a piper doll, asking "Would this be it?" Sure enough the doll held a *flauto antico* in his tiny hand. He told us we might find the flutes in Brescia, but since it is in the far northern part of Italy and we were working our way south, we didn't make it. So I'm still waiting for a *flauto antico* of my own.

By now our Christmas novelty boxes have become a separate family at Stornello. Most of them are contemporary Swiss and German pieces. We have a little *hausfrau* rocking her baby to sleep to the beautiful strains of Mozart's "Schlaffen, Mein Prinzchen," under a bower of roses, while an angel hovers nearby. Another is the moon, dressed in a business suit, smoking a pipe, and sporting a little

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beard, who is supervising a band of angels hanging out the stars. This one plays an old German tune which we haven't yet identified. Then we have a little orchestra which plays "O Sanctissima," conducted by Saint Peter and his baton. These boxes, which represent the least valuable part of our entire collection, and which we display only one week out of the year, are almost as dear to us as our annual Christmas guests. We like to think that they enjoy being welcomed by us as much as we enjoy welcoming them.

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